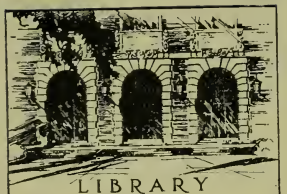

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A WOMAN'S TRIALS.

VOL. I.

A WOMAN'S TRIALS.

BY

GRACE RAMSAY.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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CHAPTER I.

IT was towards the end of September, a little past noon. The proud old chestnuts in the Tuileries Gardens were gathering rich autumn tints of purple and red, that harmonized softly with the fading green. The *jets-d'eau* were still playing, rippling, and gurgling, and splashing their silver spray up into the sunlight.

A travelling carriage that had excited the admiration and curiosity of the strollers in the Champs Elysées, drew up before the gateway of a large square building on the sunny side of the broad promenade.

"Here we are!" exclaimed the footman, and jumping from his seat, he summoned the porter with such a sonorous clang at the bell as only an English flunkey can give.

The carriage step was lowered and a gentleman alighted, and assisted his companions to descend.

The first was a lady of apparently forty years of age, fair and dignified, with the slow, *nonchalant* step that generally betokens indolence or delicate health. The second was a young girl, whom her father rather lifted than handed from the carriage. The three walked in through the courtyard to the front door, where the female Cerberus was waiting to receive them.

The gentleman handed his card to the woman, who with a variety of dips and smiles showed the travellers into the *parloir*.

"Donnez-vous la peine, Mesdames," she said; and placing chairs for the ladies, she tripped out of the room.

When the door closed, the young girl drew her chair closer to her mother's.

"Dear mamma, I feel so frightened," she whispered.

"You silly child," returned her mother, who seemed quite as agitated as her daughter; "what is there to be frightened at? Madame St. Simon is no doubt as kind as your good Mademoiselle Rosalie, whom you loved so much, and who took

such care of you for the last four years."

"Oh, but then I was at home, mamma."

Sir John Stanhope busied himself examining the drawings on the walls of the reception room. They were signed by pupils of the Establishment, and supposed by uninitiated visitors to be the bona-fide productions of the young ladies.

"My dear Mabel," observed Sir John, "I hope you may, on leaving this distinguished institution, be able to shew something as creditable to yourself and your teachers as some of the specimens before us."

"I hope so, dear papa," replied his daughter, with a nervous glance at the opening door. It was the parlour-maid to say that "Madame priait ces dames de passer chez elle."

Mabel felt relieved, as if the few seconds delay before the dreaded interview gave her time to summon up her courage.

Sir John looked undecided; he felt inclined to express his private opinion on the coolness of the French school dame, summoning *his* wife to an audience, some-

what after the fashion in which he admitted one of his tenants to the same honour.

Lady Stanhope guessed what was passing in her husband's mind, and to prevent any awkwardness at the commencement of their acquaintance with Madame St. Simon, she rose and followed the servant across the vestibule.

It never occurred to Sir John that his intercourse with any French man or woman could be otherwise than a succession of hostilities, more or less dangerous, as circumstances should ordain. This forced march looked like a compromise of his dignity at the starting point; but before he had arrived at any satisfactory decision, as to the manner of protesting against it, the door was thrown open, and the three travellers were in presence of the *maîtresse de pension*.

If they expected (as one of the party decidedly did) to see in that lady a gay, over-dressed, be-ribboned personage, they were thoroughly disappointed. Madame St. Simon was tall and slight; her hair, of a brilliant black, was drawn classically back in plain bands, its large

rolls fastened by a plain shell comb. Her pale face would have been sickly but for the flashing of the keen grey eye that lighted up her features, and pierced the eye it rested on.

I don't think any one would say she was handsome, but she was what the French call *une belle femme*. Her face, in repose, looked hard and cold, but she had a bright smile that lighted the sallow features, though it never warmed them; one of those smiles that come and go, leaving no trace behind them, fading away suddenly; it was pleasant while it lasted, and you were sorry to see it die out so quickly, like daylight sinking at once into darkness without the intervening shadows of twilight. Madame St. Simon had a long white hand, that gave her an air of high breeding, and a small, narrow foot, that fell noiselessly on the polished floors and stone passages of Belle-Vue.

Her dress of rich black silk was of irreproachable taste, and perfectly simple; a handsome cameo fastening a small linen collar was the only ornament she wore.

Lady Stanhope was pleased, and Sir John surprised out of his pre-arranged attack. The lady, who was seated half-reclining on a low green velvet couch, rose with a winning smile, and presenting her hand to Lady Stanhope, drew her gracefully to her side upon the couch, and motioned Sir John and Mabel to be seated.

"Chère Milady," she began, addressing Lady Stanhope, "I was deeply touched by your letter, and the confidence you place in me; I will care your dear child as the apple of my eye. Nothing claims my gratitude so much as the trust of English parents who confide their children to me at such a distance. And, believe me, it is not misplaced. I cover them with my eyes—with my heart," protested the French woman, with an earnestness that brought the tears to Lady Stanhope's eyes, while Madame St. Simon seemed with difficulty to repress her own.

Sir John thought the sentimental effusion rather premature; besides, he had a national horror of a scene, and if this continued such a catastrophe was inevitable.

He cut it short by asking to see a prospectus of the school.

"I wish my daughter to have a separate room, and every comfort and advantage that your establishment can afford, madame," observed the baronet.

"Certainly, Milord," replied Madame St. Simon. "Mademoiselle must have one of our pretty rooms looking on the Promenade. She shall go out for a walk every day with the English governess. Milady is a Protestant?" turning to Lady Stanhope.

"Yes; and in placing my child under your care," her Ladyship replied, "I must have the assurance that her religion will not only be untampered with, but that she shall have every facility for religious instruction. You have, I presume, an English clergyman attached to the Establishment?"

"Oh, bien entendu, Milady! Ces chères enfants are provided with every moral and religious advantage; the regular attendance of one of their own pastors is a necessary guarantee to their parents, while

it lightens my responsibility on the most most important of all points."

"We should like to visit the 'Institution,' if it be not giving you too much trouble, observed Lady Stanhope, after some further inquiries concerning the rules of the house.

"With much pleasure, and forgive me," added Madame St. Simon modestly, "if I say with much pride. This *chère maison* has been to me all that husband and children are to other women. I have spent the best years of my life in bringing it to the point at which you now see it. I may have acted unwisely for my own happiness, in sacrificing the joys of domestic life to the realisation of my Utopian dreams about education, but the dream was a most noble one, and there was a great work to be done."

"A most noble work, if properly understood," rejoined Sir John, whose prejudice was beginning to thaw under the influence of Madame St. Simon's quiet, earnest manner.

The house was admirably adapted to its present purpose, although originally

used as a private residence. It formed a quadrangle; the inner courtyard was laid out as flower-garden; two sides of the building were devoted to the classes and refectory; on the third were the Salles des Professeurs, the Salles de Gymnase et de Dessin; the south was reserved for Madame St. Simon's private apartments and the reception rooms. Madame St. Simon entered one of the classes, where her presence was acknowledged by a deferential rising of the young ladies, who stared more eagerly than politely at the graceful English girl who was about to become their companion.

"This is to be your study-room, ma petite," said the lady, turning to Mabel. "Mes enfants," addressing her pupils, "je vous présente une amie de plus."

The announcement was followed by a murmur and a curtsey.

Nothing could be more satisfactory to the most exacting visitor than the perfect order of the whole establishment. The cleanliness was perfect, and the appointments in the different *salles* were complete without any attempt at display.

The gymnastic hall attracted Sir John's special admiration, which he expressed very graciously to Madame St. Simon.

"Yes," she said, "I have taken great pains to fit it up thoroughly, for I believe the use of gymnastic exercises one of the best things for developing the health and strength of young people. Some parents have accused me of paying too much attention to the physical development of my pupils, and so taking away time from their studies, but my instinct is against them there. The time given to exercise and the cultivation of health, is never time lost. A neglected education may be repaired, a ruined constitution never can."

They had finished the tour of the house, including the long dormitory upstairs, with its fifty little iron beds in two prim rows on either side, the length of the room broken only by a large iron stove running its black chimney up into the ceiling.

Both Sir John and his wife were charmed with the inspection, and they took leave of Madame St. Simon with the warmest expressions of approval, Sir John saying as he held her soft white hand, "Madame,

I wish I had six daughters to leave you instead of one."

It had required no small amount of entreaty and persuasion to induce Sir John to place his daughter in a French boarding school. To boarding-schools in general he bore a decided ill-will, to French ones in particular. But Mabel could coax her father into anything she set her heart on having or doing. She was an only child and an heiress, but, singular as it may seem, not the least spoilt.

The only joy that her young life missed was the companionship of a sister or a brother, and the idea of going to school, where she would live in pleasant harmony with numbers of girls of her own age, had a wonderful attraction for her. She had hinted it more than once to her father, but the suggestion had been snubbed by a peremptory "Tut, tut, child; you know nothing about it. They would starve you to death, and what should I do then for my pretty Mab?"

Circumstances came to Mabel's assistance, though not in the way she should have best liked.

Lady Stanhope's health had suffered so severely from the foregoing winter in England, that her husband was advised by the physicians to take her for a whole year to Madeira.

Now, Madeira, they said, was not at all a desirable residence for her daughter, either in its climate or otherwise. There were few, if any, educational resources to be had there. True, they could take a governess with them, but Mabel required something more now; she had arrived at a point when the teaching of superior masters was necessary to complete the governess's work. So after much hesitation and discussion, and minute inquiries as to the best schools in London and Paris, it was decided that Mabel should remain during her parents' sojourn abroad at Belle-Vue, under the maternal tutelage of Madame St. Simon.

Not till she found herself alone next day in Belle-Vue, her cheeks still wet with her mother's tears, did Mabel realize at what a price she had bought the grant of her long urged request. It had all been pleasure and sunshine in the distance, but

now that she held it in possession, the bitterness of parting with her beloved parents gave it a sadly different aspect.

It was the first time she had ever been separated from her mother even for a day, and the long succession of days and months that must intervene before they were re-united, stretched out before her in interminable length. She upbraided herself remorselessly for having allowed her longing for the joyous companionship of school life to have tempted her to such a sacrifice. Though Mabel was nearly sixteen, she was much more of a child than most young ladies of that mature age believe compatible with sense and dignity. That our heroine was deficient in neither, we hope to prove in due time.

For the present we are forced to confess that Miss Stanhope was guilty of the undignified proceeding of sobbing herself to sleep on the little white-curtained bed, where she is to sleep and dream for the next eighteen months.

About an hour elapsed, when she was aroused by the ringing of a bell, and the

touch of a hand laid, not roughly, but sharply, on her shoulder.

"What's that?" cried Mabel, starting up. "Who are you?"

"The dressing bell, and Milly Jackson." The answer was more concise than clear. "The bell is to notify that it is time to dress for dinner," explained the intruder, "and my name is Milly Jackson."

"Oh, thank you," said Mabel, rising hurriedly. "Am I to put on a low dress?"

"Bless you, no; that would be larks!" replied Milly Jackson. "Let's see what sort of a dress you have on." She bustled about for a match, found one on the chimney-piece, struck it against the wall, lit the *bougie*, and then held it close to Mabel's dress; it was a dark green silk, quite new, and very prettily made.

"Will it do for dinner?" asked the new comer, hesitatingly.

"I should think so!" exclaimed her companion, with three notes of admiration in her tone; "why it's a love of a dress —was it made in Paris?"

"I believe it was," said Mabel.

The answer seemed to puzzle Milly; she

turned her scrutiny from the dress to the wearer's face. It was still flushed from crying, but looked very beautiful. The deep hazel eyes, under the long black lashes, had a world of fire and tenderness in their depths, and the fair hair that had fallen from the comb, all wavy and shining, looked like a veil of gold thrown round the small, well-set head.

Milly noticed the red lids and the choked sob, that shewed the tears were ready to start up again at a moment's notice; she poured out some water into the diminutive *cuvette*, that represented a basin on the washing-table.

"Come and bathe your eyes, like a dear, and try and don't fret. You won't when you get used to it. Were you never at school before?" she asked good-naturedly.

"No, never," said Mabel, "do you like being here?"

"Oh yes, very much, it's a jolly kind of school, at least for the parlour-boarders."

"Am I a parlour-boarder?" asked Mabel.

"Yes, if you have a room to yourself, and dine with Madame St. Simon."

"I know I have a room to myself," said Mabel, "but I don't remember if papa said anything about where I was to dine."

"Then if he didn't, you have to dine in the refectory, and the Fates have mercy on you!"

"What is there so dreadful in the refectory?" inquired Mabel, startled at Milly's lugubrious invocation.

"Why you will be starved, that's all, but unless your father's a fool he is sure to have thought about that. It's the first thing my father thought of when he put me here."

"My father is not a fool," spoke Mabel indignantly, "and he never forgets anything that can make me happy."

"Oh, dear! don't be huffed," said Milly, laughing; "you'll never get on here, if you are the least thin-skinned. I only meant to tell you, you were very lucky if you escape the refectory cramming, and if your father didn't understand the difference, why you can write and tell about it, and he'll make it all square with Juno."

"Who is Juno?" inquired Mabel, more and more bewildered at her new friend's

peculiar manner of expressing herself.

"We call Madame St. Simon Juno, she's so high and mighty; but you will learn all that soon enough," continued Miss Jackson, while Mabel drew the brush through her long silken hair.

"My eye! what a jolly lot of hair you have! such a sweet colour too! I wish mine were like it. What's your name? you didn't tell me yet?"

"Because you did not ask me. My name is Mabel Stanhope."

"Mabel! what a funny name! Don't they call you something else at home for shortness?"

"Papa calls me Queen Mab," replied Mabel smiling.

"Mab! that will do; we'll leave out the Queen. Oh, there's the dinner-bell, and I forgot to change my sleeves."

"You won't leave me to go down by myself," pleaded Mabel timidly, "I don't know the way, and I shall be so awkward going in without any one; that is, if I am to dine with you."

There is an instinct that makes us yearn to those who look to us for help. Milly

was unused to be appealed to by her school friends in any emergency, unless it happened to be some wild frolic that she was always ready to be foremost in. No one ever thought of going to Milly for advice in anything serious, yet for all that she was looked up to as a leader in the school, and was a general favourite. Kind-hearted and careless of blame, always ready to help another out of a scrape by getting into it with them, the great business of her life was to get through the day with as little trouble and as much fun as possible. She never studied at the study hours, but gave herself endless trouble in trying to kill the time by making faces behind her books, and thereby setting her opposite neighbours into "fits," as the school term goes; yet, somehow when the examination day came round, Milly generally managed to get off with a good place. She had been two years at Madame St. Simon's, when she introduced herself to Mabel Stanhope, and was to remain there one year longer.

Perhaps this rollicking girl was the last person Mabel would have chosen as her

chaperon, if she had had a choice, but she had not. The want of refinement and good breeding that eked out in Milly's free and easy manner might have repulsed her at first; but the bright, sunny face, and good-natured cheerfulness with which she comforted the lonely new-comer, atoned for short-comings that grated on the sensitive, refined nature of her *protégée*.

On their way along the corridor, they met some of the parlour-boarders hurrying down in answer to the dinner-bell.

"Let me introduce you," patronised Milly. "Miss Wilson, Miss Wood, Miss Stanhope."

"A parlour-boarder, I suppose?" asked Miss Wood.

"I believe so," returned Mabel.

"Perhaps I ought not to go with you till I am certain?" she added, looking to Milly for counsel.

"Oh, come along; if you're not in the right box, Juno will soon let you know it, and hand you over to the Philistines."

This was not very encouraging to the timid new-comer; however she had nothing for it but to go on, and take chance

for being admitted or turned off to the refectory.

The staircase at the end of the above-named corridor opened into the cloisters, where a group of young ladies were collected at the lower end near the first-class school-room. They were not near enough for Mabel to see their faces, but by way of compensation, she had every facility for hearing their voices, not silvery ones at any time, and less so now than ever, being raised in angry altercation. The shrill, ringing tones fell on the ear unpleasantly. Five or six talked, or rather, shrieked together, gesticulating violently; one in particular, who, judging from her animated part in the discussion, seemed the principal character in the fray, shook her closed hand in the face of a small wiry person, of whom she might have easily had the advantage in single combat; but that alternative was prevented by one of her companions holding her back, while another planted herself between the belligerents.

"What has happened?" inquired Mabel, glancing with more amazement than curiosity at the noisy scene.

"It's probably some quarrel of no consequence. The French make such a fuss about nothing; we have grown used to it, and so will you in time, Miss Stanhope," observed the young lady introduced as Miss Wilson; she smiled and strolled on towards the dining-room.

Two other parlour-boarders followed her, leaving Mabel still looking on with Milly at the sight.

"I'd like to see the fun out," exclaimed Miss Jackson coolly.

"Is that what you call fun?" inquired her companion, with a look of such genuine astonishment, that Milly could not refrain from laughing.

"Well, I daresay it is rather disreputable, but it's great fun to hear those French parties pitching into each other. They go at it with such a zest."

"Vous mentez!" shrieked the small combatant at her tall antagonist.

"Menteuse vous-même!" was the brisk retort.

"Good gracious; they will do something dreadful before they stop," and Mabel with her British appreciation of the

insults interchanged by the assailants, really did tremble at what was to follow.

"Had you not better interfere?" she asked.

"By reading the riot act? Yes, and get abused for my pains, the usual reward for such attempts at peace-making," replied Miss Jackson philosophically; "but pray don't excite yourself. Those little compliments are given and taken in the kindest spirit, and so frequently that their edge is considered blunted by use. A French girl thinks no more of calling or being called a liar, than we should of voting one another a bore."

"Who are they?" inquired Mabel, her astonishment increasing with every attempt at explanation from her companion, "they cannot surely be ladies!"

"Aren't they though! The first blood (some of them) in the old faubourg. But if we stay watching them much longer, we shall have Juno down on us, for being behind time to receive her highness."

It was the first Saturday of the month, and Monsieur l'Abbé, Chaplain of Belle-Vue, usually dined there, after hearing

some of the pupils' confessions, and giving an hour's instruction on the Catechism. He was an old man, and looked much older than he was; a venerable face was that of the white-haired priest. The forehead was lofty and care-worn, and the mouth in repose looked rigid, till the smile came like a sweet surprise to dispel the first impression, when the cold severity of the outline melted away, and in its place beamed out the very sunshine of benevolence.

The deep-set eyes had a power of penetration that made the children say, Monsieur l'Abbé could read their thoughts, so it was no use telling him anything but the truth, and they never did. When dinner was over, Madame St. Simon presented Mabel to the Chaplain, whose glance had been frequently directed to the new-comer opposite to him.

"Monsieur l'Abbé," she said, "try and comfort this *pauvre petite;* you have more talent for such missions than I have. Mademoiselle is not a Catholic," she added, by way of a preliminary caution.

"That need not prevent our being good

friends, I hope," remarked the Abbé looking kindly on Mabel.

"No, Monsieur," replied the young girl timidly.

She felt rather *impressionnée*, as the French call it, in coming thus, for the first time in her life, in close contact with a Catholic priest; but the gentle suavity of his manner soon put her at ease.

Milly Jackson loitered near the *salon* door on the watch to seize upon her *protégée*; she was rather proud of playing chaperon to the pretty, new girl; and resolved not to allow any one else to supplant her.

Monsieur l'Abbé saw the merry face turned upon himself and Mabel, and beckoned her to approach.

"Mademoiselle Meely," he said, "I am going to give this young *compatriote* into your charge; see that she dances every quadrille to night, and if I don't find her eyes as bright as your own next time we meet, *gare à vous!*" and he held up his finger menacingly at Mademoiselle Meely. She seemed by no means awe-struck, but curtsied and answered pertly, with a twinkle in her grey eye:

"I undertake the task, Monsieur l'Abbé. Mademoiselle shall not shed a tear under my patronage."

"Amusez-vous bien, mes enfants," said the Aumonier, and wished them good night.

It was the custom at Belle-Vue for the first class to join the parlour-boarders every Saturday in the *salon*.

Madame St. Simon was supposed to prepare her pupils for the highest positions in society, and one of the accomplishments, on which she laid particular stress, was what she termed *l'art de recevoir*.

The Saturday soirées were got up for the purpose of initiating the young ladies into the art of holding a *salon*, beside which, in Madame St. Simon's opinion, all the graver duties of life sank into insignificance.

The parlour-boarders, twelve in number, being all English, Mabel had as yet seen no specimen of the French pupils. They generally made their appearance some five minutes after Madame St. Simon had taken her seat in the *fauteuil* beside the

fire, and the English girls had distributed themselves through the room. There was a rushing noise in the hall, and a buzz of voices, then a dead silence, and the door opened. Madame St. Simon rose to meet *ces demoiselles*, who advanced in pairs; they mustered about twenty strong. There was a graceful bow from Madame St. Simon, as she presented her hand to each, saying she was charmed to see her.

The young ladies answered with some pretty speech held in readiness for the occasion, and curtseying withdrew, leaving the next couple to go through the same ceremony. Mabel thought it rather theatrical, but very gracefully done, as it certainly was; all French girls have an innate sense of elegance, which makes them feel at home in ceremonies and presentations, where an English girl is generally as clumsy as a clown.

As soon as the music began there was a general stir, a bustling about, engaging of partners, and interchange of compliments. Milly had assumed a certain importance as appointed chaperon to the "new girl," and resolved to make the most of it. After

dancing two quadrilles with her *protégée*, she said :

"Now I'll introduce the best girls to you ; try and don't get in with the others, especially the French ; we English never get on with them, they drag you into no end of scrapes, and leave you to get out of them the best way you can. Olga," beckoning to a pretty girl who was in conversation with a lady near them, who, Milly informed Mabel in a whisper, was Miss Jones the English governess, "come and dance with Miss Stanhope. Mademoiselle Czerlinska, Miss Stanhope." Then added in a whisper to Mabel, "She's a Pole, a duck of a girl, you'll like her immensely," and having done what she considered her duty, Milly turned away to mix in the crowd, and answer some of the eager questions that were put to her on every side as to who Mabel was, and whether she had known her at home.

Olga was about the same age as Mabel, and until now had been considered the beauty of the school.

She had the soft graceful manners of her countrywomen, and those powers of

fascination that made Napoleon the First say: "If an angel could come down from Heaven, a Polish woman could bring him to her feet."

Mabel felt more at home with Olga, after five minutes conversation, than she had done with Milly in spite of her good-natured patronage, and before the quadrille was finished she had promised Olga to sit next her in class, if she had the good fortune to be put in the same division.

At eight o'clock, tea was brought in; one of the French girls presided at the table.

"Do you take tea?" said Olga to her companion.

"Oh, yes, we always do in England."

"Then I'll bring you a cup; wait here while I fetch it."

Mabel sat down as she was desired, and began to look around her; she was not many minutes alone when the lady Milly called Miss Jones, came and took Olga's vacant seat beside her.

"I see you are English, and come to bid you welcome," she said, holding out her hand to Mabel.

There was something about Miss Jones that Mabel warmed to instantaneously. It was not her beauty; Miss Jones was ugly, decidedly ugly; her skin was yellow and parched, her eyes sunken, and of a nondescript colour; her teeth projected uncomfortably, and when she laughed, gave a skeleton appearance to her mouth. For all that there was a sweet expression about her face that won Mabel's heart at once.

They had not been long together, when Olga returned with a cup of some white washy looking beverage, three huge lumps of sugar sticking up through it, like small pyramids.

Mabel looked very much inclined to burst out laughing as she took the cup from Mademoiselle Czerlinska, but the latter discreetly whispered: "Take care, Juno is watching us; if she sees you laughing at her *thé*, you'll hear of it by-and-by."

The hint was enough to restore Mabel's gravity; she pretended to sip the tea for a minute, and then laid it on a table beside her to cool.

The proceedings at the tea-table attract-

ed her attention, and caused her no small amount of curiosity and amusement. The moment a cup was poured out, half-a-dozen hands were stretched out to snatch it; this was seldom achieved without portion of the tea being spilt. The next move after securing the prize was to make a dart at the sugar-bowl, which was generally emptied before half the company had obtained a cup of the coveted hot water. The disappointed ones, protesting against the greediness of the others, pushed their way out of the crowd round the table, jostling and elbowing the successful candidates, so as to shake the tea out of their cups, thereby eliciting sundry indignant expostulations, and cries of "malhonnête," "gourmande," "que tu es grossière,"

Mabel's look of amazement did not escape Olga or Miss Jones, who were both watching her with amused countenances.

"You're not much edified, I fear," observed the latter; "but you'll be less surprised at this specimen of French politeness when you come to know more of it."

"I could not have imagined anything so

barbarous amongst civilized people. Why does Madame St. Simon allow it?" inquired Miss Stanhope.

"Oh, Madame St. Simon does not see it; her *fauteuil* is against the tea-table, and she is too busy talking to the *sous-maîtresse* to mind what is going on behind her."

"But you have forgotten your tea," said Olga, turning towards the table where Mabel had left her cup; the cup had disappeared. Mabel laughed; she was rather glad to have it disposed of, but she was at a loss to understand what had become of it.

Olga cast her eyes round the room, and saw a French girl at a distance grinning mischievously at the trio in the corner; she immediately suspected her to be the thief.

"I'll go and tell Madame St. Simon," she said angrily, "and have that nasty Madeleine Renard punished for her insolence."

"Oh, pray don't," pleaded Mabel, "I feel quite grateful to her for saving me the trouble of drinking it."

"Well, let it be a lesson to you never to leave anything of the sort in that girl's way again, unless you want to get rid of it," counselled Olga.

There were a few more dances after tea, and then Madame St. Simon gave the signal for the breaking up of the party. The *sortie* was pretty much the same as the *entrée;* the young ladies withdrew from the *salon* as gracefully as they had entered it. So ended Mabel's first evening at Belle-Vue.

CHAPTER II.

THE next day being Sunday, the English girls did not go into class, and as they were Protestants, Miss Jones took them to morning service.

The sermon struck Mabel as being full of practical good sense, and the preacher as a simple earnest man, who thought more of doing good to his hearers than of gaining their admiration. She was too inexperienced in controversial questions to seize any defect of doctrine that it might contain; but when the young ladies sat down to breakfast on their return from Church, a discussion arose as to the orthodoxy of the preacher and the soundness of his views. Miss Jones breakfasted with the parlour-boarders on Sunday in the dining-room. Milly Jackson was the first to begin.

"I wish Mr. Brown joy the next time

he sees me in his Church! One might as well go to the Madeleine at once, and hear an out and out Romanist sermon. I'll tell Madame St. Simon I shan't go to church any more, unless she can send me somewhere else."

"Really, my dear," said Miss Jones mildly, "I don't see what you can find in the Reverend Mr. Brown's sermon to object to; for my part, I think his views perfectly sound, and himself a most godly man."

"Oh," retorted Milly, "I was not aware that you were of his way of thinking. Perhaps you send him an occasional present of wax candles; there was a grand display this morning."

"Mesdemoiselles!" interposed Madame Laurence, the French *surintendante*, who presided at *déjeûner* when Madame St. Simon was not present, "I must request you to speak French; politeness ought to prevent your speaking a language I cannot understand, and you know what strict orders I have from Madame St. Simon on the subject. She questioned me again last night as to whether English was spoken at table in her absence."

"We were discussing something that would not have been of the least interest to you, Madame," explained Milly in French.

"I daresay not," returned Madame Laurence sarcastically; "your conversation does not generally run on interesting topics; but it is my duty to see that you speak French, and yours to obey the wishes of your parents."

"Certainly, Madame," said Miss Jones; "I ought to apologise in the name of these young ladies for our impropriety in speaking English, especially before you. We were alluding to the sermon preached this morning by our Minister."

"Speak in the singular if you please, Miss Jones," said Milly pertly. "Mr. Brown is no minister of mine, nor of any true Protestant. I, for one, don't understand his new-fangled doctrines, and I shan't trouble him in a hurry again."

"What do you think of his preaching, Henrietta?" said Miss Jones to a pensive lackadaisical girl, who had, as yet, taken no part in the conversation.

"I, oh! I beg your pardon; I was

thinking of something else. What did you say ?"

Henrietta Wilson was a sentimental young lady, who was always starting from a reverie.

"Come down out of the clouds then," said Milly Jackson, "and say if Mr. Brown is not a most unprincipled man to call himself a Church of England Minister, and turn out such a figure as he treated us to this morning; besides lighting tall candles on the altar, as he calls it."

"Well, I can't agree with you that it is unprincipled to wear a tight coat with silk buttons, or even to burn candles on the Communion table; in fact, I rather like candles, there is something poetic about them; then he has a delightful voice, and reads so well."

"I think he is a duck of a preacher," said Miss Woods, who made it a point always to agree with the last speaker.

"Well, I *don't*," protested Milly, "and I'll go with the first class to the Madeleine next Sunday, if Madame St. Simon won't let us go to the Rue St. Honoré."

"You must try and agree amongst

yourselves," observed Madame Laurence, "for you cannot expect Madame St. Simon to have sittings in every church in Paris to suit your different tastes; besides, there is no one to go with you except Miss Jones."

"Tant pis," replied Milly Jackson, "I'll go to the Madeleine!"

"And so will I, and I," cried several of the young girls, who had taken no part in the conversation but secretly sided with Milly in her dislike to Mr. Brown's doctrines, or probably to his dress, of which they were more capable of judging.

"My dears," reproved Miss Jones, in tone of surprise and distress, "you cannot seriously intend doing anything so wrong; what would your parents say about it? Think of the risk to your own faith in exposing yourselves to the dangerous influence of Catholic preaching, and those ceremonies that are so apt to fascinate young minds."

"One does not turn actress for going to the theatre," said Milly, who continued spokeswoman for the discontented party, "and as for the preaching, it will do us

a great deal of good to hear a fine French sermon."

"Yes," replied Miss Jones, "if there were no other objection, I would be only too glad to assist every Sunday at one of their sermons; it is the best French lesson one could have; nothing familiarises one so much with the idiom of the language."

The bell rang for recreation, the circle broke up, and the discussion was laid aside till the contending parties met that evening in Milly Jackson's room. There is was decided that eight of the pupils should continue with Miss Jones to sit under the obnoxious Mr. Brown, while the others went with a French governess and some five or six grown French girls to the Madeleine, or whatever Catholic Church they should select. The whole thing looked rather unsatisfactory to Mabel; she had never heard the orthodoxy of a preacher contested, and she was puzzled to make out in what point of his sermon Mr. Brown had drawn upon himself the odium of his hearers.

The candles had struck her as odd, but she set it down to the circumstance of

their being in France, and accepted it as a concession to the foreign habits of the country.

It seemed to her too unimportant a thing to justify the outburst of indignation that had startled her at the breakfast table. Then the idea of improving the orthodoxical difficulty by going to a Catholic Church, and assisting at devotions that any honest Protestant must shrink from as superstitious and false! All this puzzled Mabel as much as it shocked her.

That silly school-girls should venture on such a step from ill-will towards an individual, or as a piece of bravado that looked grand because it was absurd and audacious, did not so much surprise her; but that Madame St. Simon should allow it, as no one seemed to doubt she would, seemed to her an unpardonable breach of trust. She remembered the stress her mother had laid on that particular point, during her first conversation with Madame St. Simon, and how decided that lady's assurance had been, as to the strictness with which she watched over the religious education of her English

pupils. Of course it was no affair of hers if Milly Jackson and her three friends chose to go to a Catholic Church; it did not involve *her* in the discredit or the danger of such a proceeding; indeed from what she had seen of Milly she felt convinced it was more from her love of change and excitement, or perhaps foolish spite, that she had taken the initiative in rebelling against Mr. Brown; but it shook her confidence in Madame St. Simon, it destroyed the castle-building she had indulged in with regard to that lady, whom she had been prepared to look upon as the representative of her mother, and had already decked in all the attributes of maternal goodness. It made her look forward to the time she was to pass at Belle-Vue with a certain uneasiness. If there was not to be peace and security on this point, where was she to find them?

CHAPTER III.

THE Examination day came round for the second time since Mabel's arrival at Belle-Vue. It was preceded by the bustle that always accompanies such events, and elicits an amount of fresh, healthy excitement never known out of school days.

Milly Jackson with her habitual *nonchalance*, had taken things easy, trusting to her stars to come off respectably when the day came. She was in the first class; how she came there was as great a puzzle to herself as to anybody else.

"I was born under a lucky star," she used to say, "you'll see I'll come off better than people who give themselves no end of trouble."

"What is the first thing we are to be examined in?" inquired Henrietta Wilson, languidly turning over the leaves of a novel that she had been reading surrepti-

ously for the last three days, holding it on her knees, while apparently poring over an open school book on her desk.

"Roman history," replied Mabel Stanhope, "I thought it was to be geography, but Monsieur Corambert does not come to-day. It appears he is ill, and won't come till next week."

"What a pity!" exclaimed Henrietta, "and I had prepared so nicely for him."

"What a bore!" cried Milly Jackson, flinging her geography into the middle of the room, "I haven't looked at the Roman history; I am sure to be caught this time."

"Never fear, Milly," said Mabel, "come and sit next me, and I'll prompt you. Monsieur Belille never asks you much, and you are sure to fall on something you know."

"Where do we begin?" inquired Milly, pouncing on her Roman history, and shooting over the leaves with her thumb.

"At the first Punic war," replied Mabel.

Milly accepting her invitation, had crossed over the bench and sat down beside her.

"Well," said Milly, "you must let me sit at the top of the form, and I'll go in for the first Punic."

There was a general assent; Milly was a universal favourite, and all were willing to give her a helping hand out of her difficulties.

"Don't count too surely on getting the first question, I advise you," suggested Henrietta Wilson, "you know Monsieur Belille likes to take one by surprise, and I think he suspects we learn our words, for he often begins in the middle of the chapter."

"I'm done for if he does to-day," said Milly, shaking her head, "but you'll see I'll come off with flying colours, and bring in Regulus at the death." So saying, she flattened out the book, gave it a thump in the middle to make it lie down, and then began fighting over the first Punic war in a low voice, beating her chest now and again with a vigour that made one fancy her memory was hid somewhere in that direction, and that she was pounding the words into it.

There was a cessation of all noises, ex-

cept the muttering of the lessons that were conned over in low whisperings. Presently the bell rang, and Madame Laurence stepped down from her *marche-pied*, where she had been giving the last touch to the compositions that were to be submitted to the Professor.

A red velvet arm-chair was placed beside the table for Madame St. Simon, who never made her appearance in class except on such occasions, or when doing the honours to her visitors. There was a noise of footsteps along the stone passage, and of voices in pleasant conversation.

"Ouvrez, Mesdemoiselles. C'est Madame!" Mademoiselle Renard a pretty coquette, with blue eyes and a brown skin, who called herself a blonde, obeyed the summons, and threw open the folding doors.

Madame St. Simon, followed by the Professor, entered bowing and smiling to the young ladies.

"Bon jour, mes chères enfants. Vous allez me dire de belles choses aujourd'hui, n'est-ce pas?"

No one answered, but there was a buzz

and a flutter that satisfied Madame St. Simon her presence had caused a proper degree of sensation.

She swept past the desks where her pupils remained standing until she was seated. After a moment's pause, of which Monsieur Belille took advantage to arrange his copy-books, while the French girls bit their lips to coral red, and the English girls threw themselves into as comfortable an attitude as was possible on a hard, backless bench, the *séance* was opened.

"Mademoiselle Jacqueson," began Monsieur Belille in a mild voice, bowing to the young lady he addressed, "you will be good enough to let us have a succinct *résumé* of the second Punic war."

There was a death-like silence.

"Pauvre Meely, la voilà attrapée!" was the cry that rose to every tongue. Milly stood up, and after casting an encouraging look round the room, as if to re-assure her friends, cleared her throat, and replied: "Monsieur, before entering on the second, it might be well to cast a glance at the first Punic war, of which it was a continuation; and this will enable us to understand

better the character and cause of the second." Monsieur Belille assented, and Milly began her narrative.

She had a clear, full voice, spoke French with great fluency, and possessed a natural flow of language not without a certain brilliancy. A rapid style, heightened by her animated face and her imperturbable *sang-froid*, carried her through her subject with decided success. She sketched briefly the destruction of the Carthaginian fleet by the Romans under Duilius, the triumphs of Regulus, so closely followed by his fall; she hurried on with animation through the history of the noble Roman's captivity; his mission to Rome, so fruitful in wise counsel to his country and glory to himself; his return to Carthage, where vengeance and death awaited him, casting a stigma of cowardice and cruelty on the foes who were incapable of admiring the heroic self-sacrifice which made the patriot forget his own safety in the welfare of his country. Milly paused for a moment after the death of Regulus.

"Maintenant, Monsieur, passons à la deuxième guerre Punique."

"C'est assez, Mademoiselle, c'est assez," said Monsieur Belille, "I see you have thoroughly studied the subject."

"And delivered it equally well," added Madame St. Simon approvingly. "I am glad to be able to compliment you in presence of your companions, my dear, on your industry and improvement in narration; I trust it will encourage them to follow your example!"

Milly bowed, and resumed her seat, while Mabel continued the subject, taking it up from where her neighbour had dropped it. With her high notions of honour and uncompromising truth, Mabel was pained and shocked at the simple, satisfied manner with which Milly accepted the praise her conscience must have told her she deserved so little. She could not bear to think Milly was deceitful, or capable of a deliberate falsehood—but was not this falsehood in action?

Perhaps Milly was distressed in her heart, and longing to disclaim the approbation she had won so unfairly. Mabel would have given anything to look at her and see how she bore it; but that was

impossible just yet, for she was behind Mabel, whose face was turned towards the Professor. It may have been this vexed question which kept puzzling her so as to prevent her continuing clearing the thread of Milly's discourse; it may have been that her natural timidity was getting the better of her, and preventing her doing full justice to herself, as it had often done before, especially when Madame St. Simon was present; it may have been that both causes combined to unnerve her, and prevent her speaking with anything like fluency or self-possession.

Mabel was a great favourite with all her mistresses, and each of them knew that on occasions like the present, when they were most anxious that she should do credit to herself and to them, she was least capable of shining.

Madame St. Simon had so little intercourse with her pupils beyond the commonplaces of the dinner table conversation, that she had but slight opportunity of judging of their character and capabilities, or of appreciating fairly any apparent shortcoming, such as Mabel's to-day.

"I am sorry," she said, reprovingly, as the young girl stood trembling and confused under her cold, bright eye, "I am sorry to find you so little improved since the last examination. I am writing to your dear mother to-day, and hoped to have been able to report favourably of your studies from to-day's trial."

Mabel clasped her hands tightly together; she would have given every chance of success for the next year to have been able to speak, but the only words that would come, were a beseeching "Oh, Madame!"

The tears were rolling down her cheeks.

Monsieur Belille knew that Mabel had broken down purely from nervousness; her copies and compositions proved more satisfactorily than any verbal answers could do, how conscientiously she studied. He was touched by her tears and her beauty. Perhaps the latter would have been sufficient to make him look leniently on a greater crime. He turned over some copy books that were piled on the desk beside him, and, on coming to Mabel's, handed it to Madame St. Simon, saying:

"Madame, if you will look over some of Mademoiselle's historical *compositions*, it will convince you that idleness has not been the cause of her failure in the Punic war. It is a sad pity she is so nervous, for it prevents her doing justice to herself or to her teachers."

"For their sakes, Mademoiselle should try and conquer it," replied Madame St. Simon, taking the manuscript from him; "and be assured, my dear," addressing Mabel, "that self-possession is much more charming than nervousness; it never runs the risk of being mistaken for affectation."

Madame St. Simon never lost an opportunity of saying a cutting thing, when she could do so, without being suspected of injustice. It was a principle of hers that young people should be humbled as much as possible; it was the secret way of rooting out vanity, and teaching them self-control. She was too clever a woman, and far too clear-sighted, not to feel in her inmost heart that in this case it was an injustice, for no one could look into Mabel Stanhope's pure young face without

feeling satisfied that no shadow of affectation could approach her.

There was depth, great depth, in the full, soft eye, but it was transparent as the sunlight, and as pure.

Whatever the reason might be, if she had any more defined one than the pleasure of saying an unkind thing, Madame St. Simon thought proper to interpret her pupil's agitation as an attempt to attract attention, and treated it with the severity such a pettiness would have deserved.

Madame Laurence meantime sat silently listening and looking, but not daring to testify either in the case of Milly's triumph, or Mabel's failure. Each was the gift of accident, of that she felt convinced; but to dispute Madame St. Simon's sentence in open Court, to stand up in defence of one pupil and condemnation of another, when the oracle had passed judgment on them, that was a deed of heroism that the *sous-maîtresse* dare not contemplate; yet this poor, broken-spirited woman had been for more than twelve years in Madame St. Simon's service; she had given the best years of her life, and slaved with more

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than a slave's devotedness at the task she had undertaken. She plied away at her knitting, without daring to look at Mabel; her nerves could not bear the silent reproach of the poor child's tears. They were not flowing from the humiliation of unmerited defeat, Madame Laurence knew that, for she had watched her anxiously while going through the ordeal, and saw the first tear start, only when Madame St. Simon held out the implied threat of complaining to Lady Stanhope. Mabel was so gentle to every one, and so respectful to all her teachers, that it would have been difficult to say with whom she was the greatest favourite; but thrown more constantly with Madame Laurence, from being in her class, that lady had closer opportunities than any other mistress of discerning her character and appreciating it. Her love for her mother was Mabel's ruling passion, and the possibility of Madame St. Simon writing to Lady Stanhope so as to cause her a moment's displeasure or disappointment, was more galling to the young girl's heart than any punishment that could be inflicted on herself.

Miss Jones was sitting opposite to her, too much absorbed in some idioms that she had picked up about the house during the morning, to have caught all that had been going on before Madame St. Simon's appearance in the school-room; but like every one else, she knew that Milly Jackson's success was just as little the result of study as Mabel's breakdown was of idleness.

"Why doesn't Madame Laurence stand up for her?" was the first idea that suggested itself, on hearing Madame St. Simon's unjust remarks. She looked towards the *sous-maîtresse*, whose eyes were riveted on her knitting, as if her soul were bent on arriving at some conclusion with her needles. Miss Jones gave a loud "hem." Madame Laurence was impassible. Not so Madame St. Simon; she looked up inquiringly from the inspection of the copy-book. Now is the moment, thought Miss Jones, feeling as if she were about to make a desperate plunge into some invisible gulf.

"Madame," she began in French, with a violent English accent. "Je considère il eŝt de mon devoir de protester."

"Against what?" demanded Madame St. Simon.

"Against injustice! Mademoiselle Stanhope is the most studious pupil in the school, as Madame Laurence can testify," looking very decidedly towards that lady, who continued pertinaciously buried in her knitting, which seemed to have got itself into an inextricable tangle.

"Je ne veux pas me mélanger dans la conscience des autres, mais je considère il est mon devoir de testifier!"

There was a suppressed murmur of approbation, while Milly Jackson whispered across the desk "Bravo old Jo!" Madame St. Simon would have probably met the unprecedented interference from any other mistress with a haughty rebuke that would have withered the offender into thin air; but any such attempt would have been thrown away on Miss Jones. She was too single-minded to understand the airs and graces of the Frenchwoman, and too stern a worshipper of truth to have been deterred from doing the right thing by any amount of contempt or ridicule it might entail. Madame St. Simon knew

this, and generally showed more indulgence to Miss Jones's sallies and *sorties*, that were often of the most original and inopportune description, than she would have done to a slight breach of etiquette from any other inmate of her house.

She had, besides, been looking attentively through Mabel's copy-books, and they were such as to justify completely the encomiums of her master and of Miss Jones's testification.

She was not a kind woman, and the natural harshness of her nature made her often push severity to the verge of tyranny; but she saw she had been mistaken, and was disposed to acknowledge it.

"Can you corroborate this testimony in favour of Mademoiselle Mabel?" she inquired, turning to Madame Laurence.

"Oh, most willingly, and most truly," replied the nervous *sous-maîtresse*, only too glad to have the chance of doing justice to her favourite without incurring the deity's wrath. "I should have borne witness, as Miss Jones has done, to her industry and great ability, but I was so taken aback by her failure that I had

not presence of mind to do it at once. My nerves are quite overdone."

"Perhaps the weakness is contagious," observed Madame St. Simon, with a smile that looked like a sneer. If there was one thing Madame St. Simon despised above any other, it was nerves. Madame Laurence collapsed.

"Ma chère enfant," said Madame St. Simon to Mabel, who had recovered herself during the last few minutes, "I am most thankful to accept the good testimony of your teachers, and I trust that for their sakes, as well as for your own, you will try to correct that most absurd weakness; nervousness, I think you call it?" turning sarcastically to Madame Laurence. "It is the worst enemy a rational being can be hampered with; it prevents your faculties from having full play, and if not conquered early degenerates into something too like imbecility to be easily distinguished from it."

Having delivered herself of this piece of advice, apparently for Mabel's special advantage, but in reality as a covert blow at poor Madame Laurence, whose knit-

ting had now grown quite unmanageable, she begged Monsieur Belille to continue the examination, expressing a hope that there might be no more interruptions of the same nature.

All this clever skirmishing might be very amusing to the lookers on, and very exhilarating to Miss Milly Jackson, but Mabel Stanhope could not bring herself to see the matter in this satisfactory light. There was a right and a wrong in the question.

It appeared to her, the right was always getting worsted in these passages between master and pupil; the sole object of the latter being to "dodge" the question successfully.

It was no duty of Mabel's to interfere; but it was a sort of thing that made her uncomfortable, and precluded anything like friendship between herself and the successful dodgers.

The French girls responded to her expressions of astonishment by ridicule, bantering Mabel on her puritanical scruples, which they treated as simple *bêtise*. They had received their intelligence to use it, and to what better use could they apply it

than to save themselves trouble, and cheat their masters adroitly?

The immorality of such opinions struck Mabel more painfully coming from her own countrywomen. They were quite sincere in their ultra-liberal view of the question. Many amongst them who would have shrunk with sensitive conscientiousness from an act they believed really wrong committed practical offences against truth, in dealing with their masters, without a shadow of remorse.

An episode which brought out some of the least amiable characteristics of the French girls, occurred a few days after the examinations. Amongst the least esteemed of the many light-fingered charlatans, who went by the name of artists at Belle-Vue, was one old German, called Herr Carl. He was so old, or what comes pretty nearly to the same thing, he looked so old, that many of his pupils believed him to have been contemporary with Beethoven. At all events, he had lived so completely in spirit with the *grand maître*, as he reverently styled the German poet, that he had grown almost

to believe he had known him in reality, and heard from his own lips many of the lessons he now imparted to others.

The oldest pupil in the school remembered to have seen him always in the same hat, a peculiar broad-brimmed hat, bearing inside a faded green patch with the German maker's name inscribed in gold letters, long since illegible.

In the midst of his poverty, the music master preserved a cleanliness that redeemed and dignified its penury. Indeed, he seemed so unconscious of it, so complacently satisfied with his position, that most of the thoughtless young things who never looked below the surface, and were incapable of understanding what lay hidden there, believed the old man to be a miser who had gold hoarded up in teapots and old stockings, and starved and froze himself rather than part with one of his bright Louis.

It is so difficult for youth, happy, opulent youth, to believe in poverty! They read of it in novels, where heroes and heroines play at sentimental misery; but they acknowledge its presence in real life only when it presents itself in rags,

stretching out a famished hand for the crumbs that fall from the rich man's table.

Herr Carl had none of these recognised attributes to his poverty, so the music-mad philosopher came to be called a miser. He neither begged nor whined, but held his head erect with the dignity of independence; he had never borrowed a penny in his life; had never done a mean or an unjust action, if he knew it; he toiled for his bread honestly, and such as it was, Herr Carl was content with it.

It was Saturday, the day on which he attended at Belle-Vue; the few who had the ill-appreciated privilege of being his pupils were assembled in the music-room, waiting his arrival.

The old man's punctuality had, like his poverty, passed into a proverb.

He gave his lesson at four o'clock, and at the first stroke of the great *horloge* in the courtyard, he stood at the door of the *salle de musique*, bowing to his pupils, with the rusty hat in one hand, and his threadbare brown gloves (which, to save time, he always pulled off in the corridor) in the other.

Madame St. Simon, who, like all true disciplinarians, was as punctual as a postman, valued this trait in Herr Carl's character beyond every other quality he possessed; she once paid him the compliment of setting her watch by his ring at the gate. The Professor himself owned no such luxury as a watch, but long habit had taught him to judge of the lapse of time as accurately as if the chiming of a time-piece had warned him of the flight of every half hour as it passed.

"Mesdemoiselles," he began, bowing first to one side and then to the other, "we are going to read a little Bach to-day."

"Oh, Monsieur Carl," exclaimed Olga Czerlinska "won't you let us finish that sonata of Beethoven's that we got half through last time?"

"Ha, ha, you want the *grand maître* again to-day, do you?" rubbing his hands with a malignant grin; "no, no, that won't do; we must learn to spell before we read; we must learn to walk before we run."

"But you promised us to finish the *Pathétique*, and I'm dying to get through it, Monsieur Carl," returned Olga poutingly.

"Ha! so your teeth water for it, do they? Very good; we'll wait a little longer; it will do them no harm. *Grimace* all that!" he muttered to himself, "much she knows about the beauties of the *grand maître!*" He grumbled this flattering reflexion to himself in German; the person he was talking at, was supposed not to understand his mother-tongue; not that her doing so would have in the least discomposed the old gentleman. He made it a matter of conscience to snub any well-intentioned remark his pupils ever ventured to advance on the classics, whether it expressed admiration or the reverse; in his eyes, one was as unjustifiably presumptuous as the other; the only tribute of appreciation he tolerated was attention, silent, and humble. "We shall finish exploring that gold mine one of these days," he continued in French, laying the *Pathétique* tenderly on one side; "in the meantime here is a silver one, let's see how much ore we can get out of it."

"I don't care about Bach," said Olga, turning away from the piano.

"Neither do I," whispered Mabel to the

pretty *Polonaise*, "but the sooner we dispatch him, the sooner we shall have Beethoven again; besides our friend is as headstrong as a Turk, there is no use in arguing with him."

"Vieille perruque!" muttered Madeleine Renard, distorting her piquant features into a grimace.

"He's an old humbug," said Milly Jackson, "he bores one to death with his classics, and I can't see the fun of them."

"Nobody expects the classics to be funny," remarked Mabel, "with all your ingenuity I don't think you'll succeed in getting much fun out of Mozart and Handel."

"Now, Mab, don't be logical, there's nothing bores one like logic. Here we go, old fogey, ready to pitch into the majors!"

This last apostrophe was intended for Herr Carl, who, during the foregoing conversation, had been screwing the piano stool to its proper height; a proceeding not accomplished without some delay, for while it was a hair's breadth above or below regulation height, the Professor persevered twisting it up and twisting it

down till he arrived at the precise elevation required. The lesson began, and the old man gave himself up to it with an earnestness and an energy that would have won an equally earnest response from any but those hare-brained school-girls.

How often must the best of us look back with regret and self-reproach to the cruelty which let our teachers labour to impart to us some lesson that we struggled quite as conscientiously *not* to take in. So Herr Carl worked away as if the gold medal of Munich were to reward his efforts. He opened out to those flighty young spirits the beauties of the masterpiece before them; he disentangled every intricate passage, illustrating on the keys, each verbal explanation.

Sometimes, when there came a sudden change from darkness to light, from sadness to joy, the musician's eye would light up with a strange beauty. The cold fishy look gave way to the brightness of emotion, as if some unseen lamp were kindled in his brain, shedding its mellow light through the green orbs.

Seldom, very seldom, did he meet with

a kindred glance; when he did it was from Mabel Stanhope. Not that she always understood the thrill which the wild German music sent through her heart, but she felt it, and he saw that she felt it. For one such response Herr Carl would have waited patiently all day, toiling at his ungrateful task.

To-day Mabel was determined to be more than usually attentive, for she saw that she was probably the only one present disposed to listen to him. It was enough that one did listen. Herr Carl bent all his zeal on Mabel, determined that, for an hour at least, she should enter into his spirit and drink in draughts of harmony from his fatherland.

Olga, too, grew interested in the master's glowing interpretation; something of his enthusiasm was gaining her. It was never difficult to excite hers when music was in question, and by the time the lesson was half over she had forgiven Herr Carl, and even acknowledged that Bach had beauties enough to console her for the postponement of Beethoven's sonata. The old man had grown so absorbed in his pupils that

he had not noticed the listless attitudes of the others, some of whom had moved away from the piano to a distant part of the room. Their careless answers when he had tried to awaken their attention, or elicit a solution of some complicated chord, had irritated and soon wearied him; so he left them to their ignorance, and consoled himself by imparting his instructions with redoubled zeal to Mabel and Olga.

The clock struck five. Herr Carl rose as if some electric spring within him had been touched, and paralysed his fingers on the instrument. He thanked Miss Stanhope and Mademoiselle Czerlinska for the attention they had lent him, and walking hastily to the door, seized his hat, which lay on a table near it. He was in the act of raising it for a parting salute, when the weather-beaten crown came rattling to the ground, with the old brown gloves on top of it.

The master started; his first idea was that age had done its work, and that his trusty head-gear had bent under the last half-ounce. He seemed perplexed and sorry, but there was not one tinge of

smarting pride or shame upon his countenance. He looked at the fallen crown and said playfully: "Pauvre chapeau! thou hast served me well, I ought to have let thee rest sooner!"

A suppressed titter, followed by what school-girls call an explosion, roused him from his meditation on the mutilated hat; he turned abruptly towards a group of four or five of his French pupils, and met their eyes sparkling with mischief and mockery.

The old man gazed at them for a moment in silence. The blood mounted slowly through the parched skin, and his eyes had a light in them not goodly to see. The culprits shrank under his glance; not even Madeleine Renard dared meet it unabashed. The true state of the case had struck the other pupils more quickly than it had done Herr Carl, and they were in hopes he would have gone away without discovering it; but they were mistaken.

He stooped to pick up the gloves, when Mabel Stanhope sprang forward in time to prevent it, and handed them to him. She felt for her companions all the shame they

ought to have felt for themselves, and longed to say something to the old Professor, something that would speak more admiration than pity, but the right words would not come. Perhaps the silent deference of her manner spoke more eloquently than words could have done, for a tear stood in the music-master's eye as he took the gloves from her hand, and looked at the gentle face flushed with indignant shame and true womanly pity.

"Merci, mon enfant," and he bowed a a low courtly bow to the young girl "merci!" Then turning towards the guilty group near the window, but this time with a softened glance, as if the kindness of one had pleaded for all. "Jeunesse," he said, forcing a smile, "never make a laughing-stock of poor old age, it brings no blessing."

The door opened.

They cried out, "Pardon, Monsieur, pardon!" but it was too late; the Professor was gone.

"Who did it?" were the first words uttered by several voices together, when the door had closed behind him.

The four in the window all screamed out at once, each throwing it on the other as being the originator of the deed.

"It was a shabby trick," exclaimed Milly, "I can't see the fun of it."

"It was a heartless, vulgar joke," said Olga.

The offenders were thoroughly ashamed of themselves, and bitterly repented what they had done.

"It was Madeleine that proposed it," exclaimed Marie de Ricane, "I didn't want to have anything to do with it; I knew we should get into a scrape. Of course the old *perruque* will inform before he goes home to-day."

"Vous mentez," retorted Madeleine furiously. "It was not I suggested it; it was yourself."

"Whoever suggested it," interposed Mabel Stanhope, "I suspect you executed it, Madeleine; if I had known what use you intended making of my penknife when you asked me to lend it to you before we left class, I should not have given it."

"Merci pour rien!" returned Madeleine, flinging the penknife across at Mabel; it

must have struck her full in the face had not Olga, with quick presence of mind, thrust out her arm between Mabel and the well aimed missile, which struck her hand and then rebounded to the floor. Mabel snatched up the penknife and raised her hand to dash it back on the assailant, but her wrist was grasped so tightly, that the knife dropped from her powerless fingers. The momentary pause was enough to calm her excitement.

"Thank you, Olga," she exclaimed impulsively, "you have saved me from self-contempt; if I had struck that girl, I should have despised myself as much as I do her."

CHAPTER IV.

THE next day, when the English girls went out for their usual airing, it was agreed amongst Herr Carl's pupils that they should buy him a hat to replace the one that had received its death blow from the hand of Madeleine Renard.

Miss Jones, whose kind heart was deeply touched at Mabel Stanhope's account of that young lady's misdemeanour, readily acquiesced in her desire to atone for it; and accordingly they elbowed their way along the crowded Boulevards to the grand hatter's, whose window gloried in the Imperial arms surrounded by the talismanic words: *Fournisseur de sa Majesté l'Empereur.*

"We are sure to get a good one here," said Milly Jackson, "the old fogey will be *coiffé* for the rest of his days."

"If you could drop that vulgar habit of

talking slang, my dear," reproved Miss Jones, "and that rude way of qualifying everybody as old; Herr Carl is no more than a middle-aged gentleman."

"Who's going to be spokesman?" asked Milly, turning a deaf ear to the governess's observation, "you know how to come over the black whiskers, Miss Jones, so we will leave you to walk into that ineffable dandy behind the counter. Just look at his moustache! shouldn't I like to give it a tug! I suppose he thinks he's going to stick the spikes of it into our little 'arts."

"If you can't contain yourself, and cease those ridiculous remarks so much against good taste and good sense, I shall leave the shop."

Miss Jones stood bolt upright in the middle of the *magasin*, while she addressed this warning to her pupil. "I won't budge," promised Milly, putting on a mock-modest air, absurdly at variance with the natural expression of her face.

"Qu'aurai-je l'honneur de faire voir à ces dames?" demanded black whiskers.

"Un chapeau pour un gentilhomme de moyen-âge," replied Miss Jones.

"Le mari de Madame," put in Milly in a voice so low that it escaped the ear of the unconscious spinster.

The man turned aside to look for some suitable article, or perhaps to hide a smile, that in spite of his politeness crept over his face.

Amongst all the amiable qualities of the French, and they are numerous, perhaps there is not one that should excite the admiration and emulation of foreigners more than their heroic powers of endurance under the most trying provocation of their risibility. Englishmen and women especially should bear this in mind, and be grateful for it, which they are not.

"They murder our language just as much as we do theirs," says John Bull.

Granted, but they do it in a diffident, self-accusing way, that disarms our satire even when it provokes our laughter.

The polite individual whose nerves were about to undergo no ordinary shock from the fire of Miss Jones' vocabulary, proceeded with edifying *sang-froid* to produce a number of hats for her inspection.

There was an inexhaustible supply to

choose from, of the most elegant and fashionable shapes; the one most in favour with the Parisian beaux, the shopman informed his customers, was the narrow brim cut off close to the head.

"That's just the thing," suggested Milly Jackson, as she took it up for inspection, "it will be such fun to see it swearing at old Carl's brown regimentals, instead of that dilapidated old chimney pot of his, that used to look like a scare-crow on his bald pate."

"Oh, anything but that!" pleaded Mabel, appalled at the idea of seeing the poor old Professor, with the polished, dandified head-gear, shining over his rusty suit, "he would be a perfect fright, Milly."

"You are quite right, my dear," replied Miss Jones, "no one but that silly girl could suggest such a choice; but really it is puzzling to know what to take. I fear the plainest will look out of keeping on the good old gentleman."

She leaned her elbow on the counter, nodding her grizzly curls at the array of hats strewed out on it. Suddenly a bright idea seemed to strike her; she mut-

tered something to herself, and turning to Mabel whispered: "How do you say 'crush' in French?"

"Ecraser," replied Mabel.

"Avez-vous des chapeaux écrasés, Monsieur?" she inquired of the man.

"Non, Madame, vous ne trouverez pas des chapeaux d'occasion dans une maison comme la nôtre," replied the shopman stiffly.

"C'est étonnant," was Miss Jones naïf rejoinder. She suspected the man did not understand her, but did not like to own it.

"Come here, Mabel, don't go away, my dear, I want you to help me. What is the French for 'spring?'"

"S'élancer, sauter," replied Mabel, preparing herself inwardly for some outrageous Gallicism.

"Monsieur," continued Miss Jones, "je voudrais un chapeau qui s'élance, qui saute."

"Un chapeau qui saute!" repeated the shopman affrighted out of his risibility.

"Oui, s'il vous plait;" Miss Jones was satisfied she had hit on the right thing at last. The man looked at her for a moment, utterly bewildered.

"What do you want to say?" inquired Mabel, in English, of the governess.

"My dear, I said what I meant, and I mean what I said," replied Miss Jones, bristling up at the implied affront to her phraseology.

"But, dear Miss Jones, you can't possibly mean to ask for a jumping hat!" expostulated Mabel.

"I asked for a spring hat, you told me the spring was *sauter* in French."

It was more than Mabel could bear with all her good-nature and stoicism, she fairly laughed outright, and the mystified shopman, partially re-assured as to the sanity of his customer, joined with infinite relief in the merriment.

Miss Jones deliberated for a moment whether she should rise and walk majestically out of the shop, or join in the laugh against herself. She decided on the more sensible alternative, and when Mabel was sufficiently sobered to answer her question quietly proceeded to explain the origin of the blunder. It occurred to Miss Jones that the unpolished felt hat would be much more suitable to Herr Carl than

the shining castor of the fashionable *chapeaux*.

She recollected having seen, before leaving England, that admirable invention called the crush hat. Not possessing the corresponding idiom in French, she tried to convey her idea by asking for a spring hat, translated as a *chapeau qui saute*, thereby startling the Frenchman into the belief his customer was insane. Once the mistake rectified and the shopman enlightened as to the article required, it was soon produced, and agreed upon as the most fitting substitute for its venerable predecessor.

CHAPTER V.

MISS JONES found the idioms very uphill work. She displayed an indefatigable courage in their pursuit that was worthy of a nobler cause; but to Miss Jones every duty was a noble cause; she had undertaken to learn French as a means of honourable livelihood, and gave all her energies to the success of the undertaking. What she complained most of was the difficulty of "turning the phrases;" they never seemed to come right.

With her pronunciation the governess was blandly satisfied; she believed conscientiously that it was a faithful echo of the pure Parisian accent; this was a great point gained, there remained but to acquire fluency and correctness by vigorous study.

The *pensionnaires*, though they enjoyed many a laugh at her expense, felt kindly towards Miss Jones (when she was not

teaching them), and were always willing to assist her in her *dictées* and translations. The younger children were rather proud of playing professor to their own teacher, and Miss Jones in her humility was always glad of the little ones saucy help in her difficulties.

It was her habit out of class to walk, for an hour at a time, up and down the parlour-boarders' corridor, repeating to herself the lessons she had learned during the day, or getting by heart a number of idioms picked up here and there, and scribbled on a scrap of paper. What a lesson it was to many an idler close by, the untiring industry of the worn-out governess! There she walked day by day, tramping hard on the *carrelé* floor of the passage to warm her feet. Is there any small suffering more trying than cold feet? Winter and summer Miss Jones was a martyr to them.

She was one day making her forty-second turn up the corridor, when for the first time she perceived a door open. It was Henrietta Wilson's. That young lady sang very sweetly to the guitar, and had

a weakness for leaving the door ajar while she was practising, as she thought it looked interesting and romantic. Hearing the sound of Miss Jones' military step in the passage, she took up the instrument and began drawing her fingers across the strings to the words, "She is far from the land." There was something sweet in the sounds, although unskilfully given; Miss Jones stood listening at the half open door. When she was young she used to play on the guitar herself.

The cessation of the steps just at the threshold caused Henrietta to turn her head; she started as if the fact of the door being open had quite surprised her.

"I hope I have not frightened you, my dear," said Miss Jones, with a simplicity that no affectation could disturb.

"Oh, not much! only I was thinking of something else, far away."

Henrietta heaved a deep sigh.

"Thinking of home! oh, you need not sigh while you have home to think of."

There was something in the tone that sounded more like a real sigh than Henrietta's theatrical sob; she looked at Miss

Jones, and for the first time noticed how haggard her face was. The yellow teeth protruded more painfully than ever, and the wrinkles on her forehead were deeper and harder. The cold had given a violet tint to her skin that made it look livid.

Henrietta was kind-hearted; what girl of eighteen is not?

"Come in, Miss Jones," she said, "and sit beside the fire if you want to study."

"Oh, thank you, my dear, I shall just warm myself since you are so kind, but I study very well walking up and down the corridor; and I should be afraid of disturbing you if I staid here mumbling my bad French. Is it not very early to begin fires? You will not feel the benefit of them when the real cold weather comes."

"Why, I call this real cold weather," said Henrietta; "it's so gloomy and damp, one feels miserable without a fire! How do you exist without a fire in your room? I should much rather go without my dinner than without my fire," declared Henrietta, and she threw a large block on the embers.

"One can live without a fire," replied

the governess, holding out her hands to the blaze, "but one must have a dinner sometimes."

"Sometimes! do you mean to say that you don't get your dinner every day?"

"Not one that I can eat always; the refectory food is not like what you get at Madame St. Simon's table; there are some days, Friday for instance, that I dine off bread and *eau rougie*."

"How wicked of Madame St. Simon to starve you in that way!" said Henrietta indignantly, "she must have horrid dreams at night; I am sure I should in her place; but why don't the others complain of it?"

"French people are more used to that kind of living, and can bear it better; they get through an amount of *potage*, made of onions and grease, that would astonish your delicate appetite, my dear; I tried at first, from a sense of duty, to take it, but my good will was not proof against the sickness it caused, and the consequent weakness I suffered from for days."

"Why don't you ask for tea?" suggested Henrietta.

Miss Jones smiled. "I get a cup of tea on Thursday in the *salon*."

It was the first time since they had been under the same roof that Henrietta observed Miss Jones. She had seen her day after day trudging through her cheerless round of duties with uncomplaining cheerfulness. It never occurred to her that under the shrivelled, angular body there was a heart that burned, and beat, and pined away under the dull weight of duty, with no drop of love to sweeten its wholesome bitterness. She never asked herself if Miss Jones was nothing more than the mere studying machine she looked, groping her way through the mazes of French grammar, and picking up with the avidity of a miser every stray idiom that heedless school-girls dropped from their rattling tongues. It never struck her that the poor governess might once have been a young girl like herself, looking out into life with sunny hope, and filling up the future with bright visions of love and happiness.

No, Henrietta had never thought of this, and now that the wan, worn face

before her peered greedily into the warm blaze as a hungry man inhales the smoke of a savoury dish, she was startled to see how careworn the face was, and what an aged look it wore. There was more than moral suffering there; there was physical want; cold and hunger were written in deep furrows down the cheeks, and left their mark round the mouth, pointing the chin to a painful sharpness. Henrietta was shocked; she felt as if she had been guilty of some personal cruelty towards Miss Jones in having been so slow to notice these traces of suffering, now so evident to awakened observation. She forgot even the guitar and her sentimental song. Her visitor sat quite silent, looking into the fire, and rubbing her thin hands with a pleasant sense of enjoyment.

"Dear Miss Jones," said Henrietta, "we were talking yesterday of getting up a little tea-party turn-about in our rooms of an evening, and we want you to come and join us in a cup of tea; you can't refuse, for your lessons are over, and you may as well spend your evenings with us as by yourself. I am to begin the series

of entertainments, so I shall expect you to-morrow evening at seven."

"Thank you, my dear," replied the governess, "if there be anything that could tempt me away from my duty it is a cup of tea; but I must not yield to the temptation, there is no saying what habits of idleness it might lead me into if I once gave way."

"But I don't want to tempt you from anything except loneliness. You surely don't study in your room after dinner, and it will be as pleasant for you to pass the time before going to bed with us."

"Very much pleasanter; but I fear my French would suffer. I daresay you all speak English when you are together, like so many foolish children that you are?"

"Well, perhaps we do," replied Henrietta, smiling at Miss Jones' reproving shake of the head; "but if you come, it will make us speak French, and that will be doing an act of duty in another way, though I can't see the use of boring oneself with that stupid French after school hours, it's quite bad enough to be plagued with participles and irregular verbs for seven

hours of the day, without inflicting them on one's nerves after dinner. The rest ought to freshen you for the next day's work instead of doing you harm; now just try it, Miss Jones."

"You talk like one who has no care beyond putting in a day as quietly as you can without any looking forward to the morrow. My great object while I am here is to acquire a thorough knowledge of French, so as to enable me conscientiously to teach it when I return to England. Everything like amusement or relaxation must be sacrificed to self-improvement; while that is in my power, I cannot afford to lose a moment."

"Bon Dieu!" exclaimed Henrietta, languidly throwing her head on the back of her *fauteuil*, and stretching her feet on the little brass fender, "it makes me feel quite guilty when I see you so earnest about study. It is all such a bore to me, except music and dancing; I can quite understand any one having a passion for them. I wonder you don't throw all your marvellous energy into music, for instance; but every one has not the *feu sacré*, to be

sure, and, without that, energy is of very little use."

"I don't think the *feu sacré*, as you call it, was the thing most wanting—I had plenty of that. Perhaps it was a punishment."

"What was?" inquired Henrietta, her curiosity roused by the reticence, and the sigh that followed it.

Miss Jones unbuttoned her sleeve, and baring her left arm, held it out for her companion's inspection.

Henrietta uttered a cry of horror. The flesh was literally withered off the bone. "What happened to your arm, did you burn it?" she asked eagerly.

"No, my dear, but disease did the work as well. I went as music-mistress to a school in the North of England, after my father's death. I had not been long there when I was seized with an acute rheumatism that left my arm as you see it. If the physical suffering and its consequent deformity had been the only, or the worst result of my illness, I should have borne it unmurmuringly; but the loss of my arm was to me the loss of bread. Music was

my only accomplishment, and in losing the power of utilising it, I lost the means of living; then my passionate love for music made the privation painful beyond what I can describe." She paused for a moment, and then continued: "But God never tries us above our strength. An old friend of my father's, who heard of my misfortune, wrote to me from London, telling me his house should be my home till I was sufficiently recovered to provide one for myself. I accepted the offer with thankfulness, and spent four months with the kind old gentleman, who insisted on my having the best advice the Capital afforded, and every comfort that could hasten my restoration to health. The next difficulty was, how was I to get a living? My arm, although completely relieved from pain, was too weak and emaciated for me to think of using it on the piano, at least, for a very long time. I always regretted having neglected to cultivate languages more assiduously, and it seemed as if fate had now driven me to atone for the deficiency in my early education. I talked over the matter with my friend, who highly approved

of my idea, and generously provided me with sufficient money to defray my expenses to Paris. I had a small sum saved, which would enable me to remain there a year for the purpose of acquiring French, and improving myself generally."

"But surely . . . . I beg your pardon, you won't be offended, Miss Jones, but does Madame St. Simon accept your services without rewarding them ?"

"Yes ; that is to say, she considers them sufficiently paid by giving me board and lodging while I remain in her employment. It used not to be so formerly, I believe. The governess who was here four years ago received fifty francs a month over and above the advantage of assisting at all the classes."

"And does Madame St. Simon think you unworthy of the same consideration ?" asked Henrietta.

"Perhaps not, if she looked at the matter differently ; but the fact is, there are more teachers of English in Paris now than there are pupils, and Madame would find twenty to take my place to-morrow on the same terms, if I left her. Of course it seems a

hard bargain, and one has many discomforts to put up with ; but the advantage of hearing French spoken with a pure Parisian accent, and acquiring the idiom of the language, are great compensations."

Henrietta was too much touched by the real misery of her position, to laugh at the poor soul's eccentricity ; but she could hardly restrain a smile when Miss Jones alluded to the Parisian accent.

"Can any one be so infatuated!" she mentally exclaimed. "Why *ces Messieurs*, and even Madame Laurence, can hardly keep their countenances when Miss Jones greets them with her inevitable *Bone jour*, *Moshu ;* to be sure it's a decided improvement on *bong jour*, but it's as far from the Parisian accent as Piccadilly is from the Boulevards."

Nevertheless Miss Jones was happy in her conscientious illusion, and believed firmly that at the end of her year she should be as competent to advertise, "French like a native," as any one of the hundreds who daily publish their perfections in the columns of the "Times." Perhaps if the individual cases were ex-

amined, Miss Jones's mistake would be found less comparatively egregious than Henrietta imagined.

The bell rang for the parlour-boarders' dinner. Henrietta jumped up to arrange her hair and make some changes in her dress; Miss Jones rose too.

"Pray don't go, Miss Jones, you may as well study here till dinner is over; please do, and keep my fire from going out," urged the young girl. "That's the worst of a fire, one has to look after it; Justine is never in the way when one wants her, and it destroys one's hands poking in the ashes."

She rounded her nails delicately with the towel, powdered her face with *poudre de violette* (Madame St. Simon recommended this as a precaution against the action of cold on the skin,) and wishing good-bye to Miss Jones went down to dinner.

When it was over Henrietta returned, with Mabel Stanhope and Milly Jackson, to her room, expecting to find Miss Jones there; but Miss Jones was gone.

"You look full of something important,

Henrietta," Mabel said, as soon as the three girls were seated round the fire, "let us hear what it is."

"Did you ever see any one dying of hunger?" demanded Henrietta after a moment's pause, looking very seriously at her companions.

The two girls stared at her and at each other.

"Where is she off to now?" cried Milly Jackson. "Going to give us a lecture on anatomy or physiology, or some such sentimental bosh. If you don't take care, Henrietta, you'll go moonstruck. Mind, I warn you!"

"Very kind of you," returned Henrietta, "but I'm not gone yet. I want to know if you ever saw anyone dying of starvation, because I did."

"Well, more shame for you!" commented Milly. "Why didn't you give them something to eat, and they wouldn't have died?"

"I did not say they did die," corrected Henrietta.

"Then what did you say, or what do you want to say? Somebody died, and

somebody didn't die," and Milly turned to Mabel with a shrug of her shoulders, as much as to say, "I can't make her out, can you?"

"Do try and be a little more explicit, Henrietta," entreated Mabel.

"I said," continued Henrietta, "or at least I now say, there is somebody in this house who is literally starving, and that we must try and come to the rescue, as Milly accused me of not doing, or else she may die under our eyes."

"For Heaven's sake, what do you mean? Who are you talking about?" inquired both the girls in the same breath.

Henrietta was sincere in her pity and concern for Miss Jones, but it was not in her nature to let an opportunity, like the present, pass without turning it to account. She had created a sensation, and resolved to make the most of it.

"Can't you guess?" she exclaimed with a look of reproachful surprise; "why, the poor soul is fading day by day, and to think we have been living in comfort, and eating bountiful meals while there was a fellow-creature under the same roof with

us wanting the very necessaries of life." Henrietta burst into tears.

"Do in pity's name tell us whom you are talking of," demanded Mabel impatiently. "Is it one of the servants, or . . . . . no, it cannot be one of the pupils?"

"It's far worse," replied Henrietta, after giving vent to her emotion for a few moments, "it's far more dreadful for *us*. She had a right to look to us for sympathy, and we might have spared her much suffering but for our heedlessness, our want of thought, to use no harsher term," and she covered her eyes with her delicate white fingers, as if to keep in the tears that would force their way through.

Mabel's patience was nearly exhausted.

"If you really are in earnest," she said, "I think it would be kinder to tell us what this is all about, instead of tantalising us in this way. If you want to make a scene, you have succeeded."

"I can't see the fun of crying scenes," remarked Milly Jackson; "so, if you are going to keep it up any longer, I'll make myself scarce, and leave you to operate on Mabel."

Henrietta saw she had carried the scene far enough, and that the effect of her disclosure would be injured by prolonging it.

"I'm sorry I allowed my feelings to overcome me," she said penitently, "but if you had seen poor Miss Jones an hour ago, and heard her telling me of the miseries she has had to endure, and still endures, it would have horrified you as much as it did me."

"Miss Jones!" cried both girls together.

"Yes," continued Henrietta, "she is is actually sinking away for want of food; fancy her telling me she passed days without anything but dry bread for her dinner!" And then, her better nature again uppermost, Henrietta described, in much more elaborate words than simple Miss Jones had used, the hardships and privations the good soul was enduring daily and hourly beside them.

"Juno is a wretch to treat her so," broke in Milly Jackson, bringing down her hand on the table with a blow that made her Noël et Chapsal jump. "We

must get up a petition, or an affidavit, or something against her. I'll write to papa and tell him to expose her in the *Times*. He's a lawyer you know, and he'll make her wince!"

"Much good the wincing would do poor Miss Jones! She might be starved to death before your father could get his letter published," said Henrietta.

"Just so," assented Mabel; "we can do no good by attacking Madame St. Simon. The only thing we could do would be to subscribe together enough to have Miss Jones admitted to dine in the *salle-à-manger*. Then how could we do that without her knowing it?"

"That's not a bad idea, Mab; I declare you're a genius! If you were a man, you would be a first-rate lawyer."

"Do try and be serious and lawyer-like for ten minutes, and help us to invent some plan that may be carried out without exciting Miss Jones' suspicions. Do you think Madame St. Simon would keep the secret for us if we trusted her?"

"She would keep it by sending Miss Jones to the right-abouts," replied Milly,

"and we should be favoured with a homily on the propriety of minding our own affairs."

"No, I don't think that would answer," said Henrietta; "whatever we do must be done without either Juno or Miss Jones knowing anything about it. My idea was that we should give tea-parties turn about in our rooms, and manage to have something more substantial than tea for Miss Jones; we could easily do it I think, as some of us go out almost every day, and she never notices what we buy. The moment we enter a shop she is too busy listening to the idioms to mind anything else. We might go to the *charcutier's* and get some sliced ham and cold meat, she would enjoy that with her tea. At all events, it would be better than to let her go on living three days in the week on dry bread and greasy water. What do you think, Mabel?"

"I think you are a dear kind-hearted girl," returned Mabel warmly, "and it's the wisest thing we could do; at least for the present. So we shall begin our heavy teas to-morrow; whose turn is it to be first?"

"Mine," cried Henrietta eagerly, "I've already invited Miss Jones, I was so sure you'd both agree to it; but had we not better tell the others? Harriet Woods I am sure of. Then the Flemmings would enter into the scheme; they're all fond of poor Miss Jones."

"The only thing that will stand in her way," continued Mabel musingly, "is the speaking English; if we could muster one or two natives to sprinkle the conversation with the idioms. Suppose we asked Madame Laurence? She's very good-natured and pleasant when she hasn't a *crise de nerfs*."

"Oh no," protested Milly, "it would be no end of a bore to have the cross old thing listening to every word one said; besides, we'd have to do the polite and speak French, and it's bad enough to have it choking one all day, without being strangled with it after dinner; the only moment one has to breathe and be jolly."

"What time of the day do you happen to do anything else, pray?" inquired Mabel.

"Don't be sarcastic, my dear, it's unlady-like, and unbecoming in a Christian,"

retorted Milly, so completely mimicking Miss Jones' voice and manner, that Mabel was obliged to join in the laugh at the expense of the excellent woman for whose position her heart was so full of sympathy.

"I have given my word to Miss Jones that we would speak French," declared Henrietta, so you must either choke or stay away, Milly."

After an indignant protest, Milly agreed to make good the promise given in her name. Next day, during the walk in town, the parlour-boarders contrived to purchase the heavy extras for the tea, without awaking the suspicions of the governess.

Milly Jackson's turbulence, so often in the way of their school-room schemes, proved of infinite value there; she managed so completely to shock Miss Jones by the impropriety of her language, just as they reached the *charcuterie* shop, that the good soul began to deliver in French to her unruly pupil a sound lecture on her evil courses. Milly hit on the expedient of talking French during the walk, in order to absorb Miss Jones' attention more fully. A few minutes sufficed for Henrietta to

secure an over-abundant stock of provisions; half a cold roast fowl, a goodly slice of ham, a large piece of *veau piqué*, which the *charcutier* recommended as being *quelque chose d'exquis*. Henrietta secured the fowl in her leathern bag, which threatened to burst under the unusual tension; and the other delicacies were stuffed into the pockets of her companions.

When they had finished their purchases, Miss Jones turned in astonishment to the shop-windows, and inquired what they had been buying.

"Only a little English ham," replied Henrietta, "and something cold to eat in my room. Sometimes I have no appetite at dinner, but before going to bed I feel ravenously hungry. By the way, you won't forget your promise to take tea with me to-night."

"My memory is seldom at fault where there is a cup of tea in the way," returned Miss Jones, good-humouredly. "But, my dear, I don't think it is a wholesome habit to give yourself, eating meat before going to bed."

"It's more wholesome than going to

bed hungry," asserted Milly Jackson, "and it's fun to make a cup of tea in one's room, with the *bouillote* on a jolly fire. It reminds one of the kettle!" Milly sighed.

"I do believe Milly's growing sentimental," laughed Mabel.

"I wish she would make up her mind to grow sensible," observed Miss Jones, shaking her head at Milly.

Punctual to her appointment, at half-past seven Miss Jones knocked at the door of Henrietta Wilson's room, where she found the young people already assembled. Miss Jones attached great importance to all points of etiquette. She accepted Henrietta's invitation as seriously as if it had come from a lady of the Faubourg St. Germain, and came dressed for the occasion.

Her gala gown was a grey silk shot with copper colour; it might have been of ten years' standing, but Miss Jones said it dated only five years' back, and Miss Jones' accuracy was above suspicion. A pair of black lace mittens which always accompanied the dress on state occasions, completed her resemblance to her grand-

mother's ghost. She advanced to Henrietta and wished her good evening, as if she had not seen her an hour before, and then went through the same ceremony with the other young ladies, who, being in possession of the real intention of the gathering, were all too kindly disposed towards the poor governess to laugh at her ceremonious greeting.

"This is your place, Miss Jones," said Henrietta, rolling an arm-chair near the fire; "you will be next the table, and close to the fire. It is very good of you to come to us, and we are very much obliged to you."

She said it with unusual warmth and cordiality.

"Will any one have the charity to make the tea?" inquired the hostess. "I feel I am not equal to it to-night. Those gymnastics do fatigue one so dreadful," and she let her arms fall, as if her strength were utterly inadequate to the exertion of raising the tea-pot.

"Paresseuse!" chided Miss Jones, shaking her curls.

"Oh, that reminds me we have to speak

French to-night." The announcement was greeted with exclamations of disapproval.

"It's too bad to talk French over tea," protested Miss Flemming, the daughter of a London grocer, who sent his three girls to Belle-Vue because it was "the thing."

"Quite a heresy," declared Milly Jackson, "but we'll get used to it as one does to other heresies. I feel half converted to Romanism by those splendid sermons we have been hearing at the Madeleine these last three months. It was awfully sleepy at old Brown's last Sunday; I just thought I'd try him again and see if he improved by contrast, but he didn't; he lost fifty per cent. beside those delightful French Abbés. Didn't you think so, Henrietta?"

"Well, I must say Mr. Brown is much less impressive, and touches me less than *ces messieurs*. There is something in their sermons that goes right to one's heart. But, to be sure, that is not what people go to church for."

"What do we go for?" asked Mabel, "if not to have our hearts touched?"

"We go because it is a right thing to do," replied Henrietta, unhesitatingly.

"Harriet, please help that ham. Miss Jones, *servez-vous*."

But Miss Jones laid down her knife and fork. "My dear," she said, addressing Henrietta with the earnest look and voice that defied prevarication, "you don't mean to say that the false doctrines you have been imprudent enough to listen to of late, have made any serious impressions upon your mind?"

"It never occurred to me to think about it," replied Henrietta, after a moment's pause. "I enjoyed the preaching very much, because, as Milly says, it is so much finer than anything we have been accustomed to from Mr. Brown, or indeed any one else that I ever heard. Beyond that, I did not think about it."

The answer was as unsatisfactory as it could be without being positively unbelieving; but there was no doubting that it was the truth, as far as Henrietta was capable of discerning it.

"You must promise me," said Miss Jones, "that you will give up going to

the Madeleine, or any other Catholic Church for the future."

"We'll promise anything you like, Miss Jones, if you will only take your tea," assured Henrietta, growing fidgetty at the turn the conversation was taking. She knew more by instinct than by reflection how deeply religious Miss Jones was, and how painfully it must affect her to hear a subject to her so all-important discussed in this light way.

Mabel Stanhope, who had said nothing, was watching Miss Jones, and saw by her countenance that she was distressed; anxious to change the conversation she said to her:

"Have you read Massillon's sermons?"

"No, I never have been fortunate enough to meet with them. Have you got them, my dear?"

"Yes, I have a very beautiful edition that Olga gave me on my fête; if you like, I should be very happy to lend them to you. I have just finished the second volume, and can let you have the first; or if you prefer it, we might read some of them together. The next best thing after

hearing a fine sermon preached, is to hear one read."

"That would be a great treat to me," replied Miss Jones, her eyes sparkling.

"Well then, we'll begin to morrow at recreation if you like; it is not Herr Carl's day, is it?" Mabel inquired.

"No, old fogey came yesterday," replied Milly. "Didn't he look a swell in his new hat?"

"Poor old man," laughed Mabel, "I could not make out what change had come over him when I saw him coming along the corridor; the old hat had grown so used to his head, that the head seemed quite odd without it. What a wonderful antiquity he is! When he gets on Beethoven he works himself into such a state of excitement that I believe he actually fancies he lived and conversed with the *grand maître*. The enthusiasm is catching."

"Yes, that's the way you get round him, Mab," said Milly Jackson; "when he began raving over that never-ending sonata the other day, you turned your moonstruck eyes on him, with the tears running over. I expected to see him fall down *à l'orientale*

and worship you. I couldn't squeeze a tear out if I were to die for it. I think Beethoven a bore, and Mozart a ditto, and—"

"And Milly Jackson an uncivilized Vandal," interrupted Mabel, with an angry flash in her dark eyes.

Milly stood up and bowed, "Well," she exclaimed, "I forgive your impudence, Mab, it becomes you so much; you look deliciously pretty when your eyes are in a passion."

"You are a goose!" retorted Mabel, her colour heightening under the glances of admiration which Milly's oddly turned compliment directed to her.

It certainly was a lovely face to look at; such a mixture of fire and gentleness. The fire took one by surprise; it slept so calmly under the gentleness that one hardly guessed it lay there.

"Miss Jones," said Milly Jackson, "Mab's eyes remind me of a pretty French idiom, shall I tell it to you?"

Miss Jones suspended her tea-cup between the saucer and her lips to catch the idiom.

"Elle a des yeux à la perdition de son âme."

I don't like joking on sacred subjects, my dear," said Miss Jones gravely; "pray find some more suitable motive for *bons mots* than your own, or your neighbour's salvation."

"I didn't invent it," returned Milly, "I never said anything half so clever. It was a French officer who whispered it to Mabel the other day, when we were crossing the Tuileries gardens; she didn't hear him, being as usual in the clouds. I wish it were to me he had said it!"

"Will you have another cup of tea, Milly?" asked Henrietta abruptly.

"Yes, if you please, I have only had three."

"Are you quite sure about the French officer whispering that insolent remark to Mabel?" inquired Miss Jones uneasily.

"Oh, you're not so *naïve* as to mind Milly's nonsense, Miss Jones," replied Henrietta, "she read it in some French novel."

"French novel!" echoed Miss Jones, horror-struck, "you don't mean to say

you read such things, my dear child?"

"Well, where's the harm if I did?" replied Milly evasively.

"Where would be the harm of drinking poison. You cannot have been so foolish, so imprudent as to allow yourself such a dangerous amusement?"

Milly made no answer.

"What novels have you read?" inquired Miss Jones.

"Not many," replied Milly, "and those I did read were the most innocent things ever written, and the most amusing. Then you know, Miss Jones, there is nothing so improving as reading in a language you are learning. I have no taste for musty, old scientific books, and so I read what I can; I learnt more idioms in Monte Cristo than in all the exercises I've been stupefying myself over for the last six months."

Miss Jones was too ignorant of the current French literature of the day to be much enlightened by Milly's explanation. She had heard of Alexandre Dumas as a popular novelist, and an immoral one, but of his works she knew nothing. It did not occur to her to ask the author's name, so

she accepted Milly's assurance that Monte Cristo was a most harmless and instructive book. Still it was a novel, and as such must contain a certain dose of love-sick romance, and such-like absurdity; she therefore repeated her warning advice against French novels, and earnestly begged her young friends to deprive themselves for the future of such dangerous reading. The young people listened to the lecture more patiently than they would have done under other circumstances, but it was quite evident that the governess's presence was a considerable restraint upon them. Nine o'clock struck; Miss Jones rose, and thanking Henrietta for her hospitality, to which the poor soul had done full justice, bade the party good night.

When the door closed behind her, Miss Woods exclaimed: "Well, I've enjoyed your tea very much, Henrietta, but I can't say as much of the conversation. We didn't expect to be entertained with lectures about what church we used to go to, or to be scolded for reading novels. Milly might say, in this case, that she did not see the fun of it."

"Milly doesn't want to see any fun in it," retorted that young lady. "We asked old Jo to give her a heavy tea, and not to amuse ourselves. As to the lectures, you know one might as well expect a raven not to croak, as to expect old Jo not to lecture. She can't help herself, so we must only try to keep out of the way of it."

"In that case you had better not repeat in future any pretty speeches you hear in the streets," suggested Henrietta.

"No; that was very green of me," confessed Milly. "I ought to have known better; but my innocence and confiding frankness are constantly getting me into scrapes."

"I can't admire your frankness," said Mabel, "in throwing the absurdity on me. You might as well have acknowledged it as a specimen of your own erudition."

"I never steal other people's thunder," replied Milly. "I wish it had been said to me by that handsome lieutenant. Such a moustache!" and she threw her eyes up in comical rapture at the recollection.

"Very odd I never noticed him," observed Mabel incredulously.

"We met him twice, Sunday and Sunday week," continued Milly, "at the gate of the Tuileries Gardens, and almost in the same spot both times. I think he must live somewhere near the Palace; I'll keep a look-out for him next time we go that way. If Mademoiselle Eugénie came with us, we might have some fun; but old Jo is so awfully proper there is no having a lark with her."

"What kind of a lark could you expect to have?" inquired Mabel wonderingly. "You wouldn't be so absurd as to encourage any impudent dandy to speak to you in the street?"

"Oh, Mab, get up into the firmament, it's the best place for you," retorted Milly, pettishly. "I don't want your opinion; you are only an authority on morality and metaphysics, and I hate one as much as the other."

There was something so ludicrous in the vehemence with which she emitted this sentiment, that it was impossible not to laugh at it.

"After all," thought Mabel, "though Milly was a *diable fini*, as the French girls

called her, she could not dream of encouraging the impertinence she pretended to be amused at."

No doubt if Miss Jackson looked at the matter seriously, she would have shrunk from exposing herself to the risk of a flirtation with a Frenchman, dangerous at any time, but under the circumstances simple madness. Unfortunately, it was not her way to look at anything seriously. It would be capital fun to get up an acquaintance with a pair of black moustachios; something to enliven the dull promenade, as it was so stupid and monotonous every day down the Champs Elysées to the Tuileries and back again. Of course, it was not to go farther than a mere "lark."

The tea-party broke up, and the young ladies, wishing each other an affectionate good-night, separated.

CHAPTER VI.

ONCE the idea of striking up some sort of acquaintance with the black moustache had taken possession of Miss Jackson's mind, she set to work in order to bring it about as speedily as possible.

One thing was evident, Miss Jones should be kept out of the way; there was no chance of making her see the fun of it, and her presence would be an insuperable barrier to the success of the frolic.

But how was it to be avoided?

Sometimes Mademoiselle Eugénie, the *lingère*, accompanied the English boarders in their walk, but this only occurred when Miss Jones had some particular reason for not going out, and she was too thoroughly a Briton to forego her daily constitutional unless from actual necessity.

Somehow or other she must be got rid of. Milly trusted to her usual good luck,

and betook herself to Henrietta Wilson to discuss the matter.

Henrietta was leaning pensively on the window-sill, gazing at vacancy, when Miss Jackson burst into the room.

"Henrietta, would it not be a jolly spree if we could make a conquest of that handsome hussar?"

Henrietta started with a pretty affectation of terror. It was a way she had when spoken to, or come upon unexpectedly, to start like one roused out of a reverie.

"How—who? Oh, yes, the gentleman you spoke of last night. It certainly would be a pleasant break in this miserably dull life of ours to have something to do and to think of—something more exciting than grammar and the rule of three."

"Well, let's get up a steeple-chase for the lieutenant, and see which of us will have him," suggested Milly.

"Dear me! what a strange creature you are!" ejaculated Miss Wilson, turning her blue eyes languidly on her practical friend. "It takes all the poetry out of

life to hear you talk about the possible growth of sympathy between kindred spirits in that coarse, matter-of-fact way."

"Kindred humbug!" was Miss Jackson's prosaic remark. "There's no having a bit of fun, but you must fly off into heroics. You know it doesn't take with me; I'm not à la hauteur de vos aspirations, Mademoiselle! So please leave off the sentimental and talk sense. If we want to have any fun, we must get old Jo out of the way. Have you anything practical to suggest in order to arrive at this desirable result?"

Henrietta mused a moment.

"Suppose we ask Mabel?"

Milly burst into a scornful laugh.

"Suppose we ask Monsieur l'Abbé, or Madame St. Simon? Well, I did not think you such a baby as that. Consult Mabel Stanhope? Suppose we consult the Pope?"

"That is a good thought!" exclaimed Henrietta. "I wonder it did not strike us before."

"What! about consulting his Holiness?"

"How absurd you are, Milly! I mean

about our making the Pope an excuse for getting Miss Jones out of the way."

"The girl is gone clean mad!"

"Just listen to me, and then see. On coming out of the Madeleine, we could easily arrange to go for our walk after service without provoking suspicion in any quarter."

Miss Jackson clapped her hands.

"Yes, that's a bright idea; but mind, not a word to Mabel Stanhope," and Miss Jackson placed her forefinger on her lips. "Mab is a dear girl, but she's a vast deal too high-minded for me. I'd break my neck trying to reach up to her principles, so I don't intend to try."

"But she may find out," surmised Henrietta, "and then what should we do?"

"Deny it all and laugh it off. Besides, Mab is too honourable to peach; she'd represent to us the danger of our evil courses, but she's not capable of bringing Juno down on us. At all events, she's too much in the clouds to see what's going on under her nose."

Olga Czerlinska broke in on them at this point.

"What are you two scheming about?" she asked. "You look like a pair of conspirators concocting a plot."

"If you said Statesmen holding a Congress, you might be nearer the mark," retorted Milly.

"Most potent signiors," bowed Olga, crossing her hands on her breast in mock reverence, "may I venture to inquire the subject which engrosses your mighty powers of consideration?"

The two statesmen looked at each other as if asking mutual consent.

"Olga loves a spree as well as any one," said Milly. "We shall let her run a tilt with us if she chooses."

The nature of the tournament was explained to the new-comer. She shrugged her shoulders.

"Will you enter the lists with us?"

Olga shook her head.

"Wait till you see the prize," urged Milly, "you won't look so virtuously indifferent, *belle Polonaise*."

"I'm not too virtuous to enjoy a *plaisanterie*," protested Olga, "but I should only be a spoil-sport now if I meddled in this

one. My head is full of other things."

The bright face grew overcast. Her two friends knew she was alluding to her mother. Olga had received a letter some days before, saying she was dangerously ill.

"Poor Olga," said Henrietta, kindly, "I can't help fancying you exaggerate the state of your mother's health, somehow. If she were really as ill as you fancy, they would have sent for you to go home."

"Oh, you don't know what an affair travelling is in Poland; there is no railway nearer to our *château* than Warsaw, which is three days' journey by carriage. Of course, I should be sent for if they knew the necessity in time, but the danger is, it may be too late before—"

Olga stopped.

"If I only knew," she continued, clasping her hands tightly, "if I could only be sure it would not end so! I could bear any amount of suffering and anxiety if I only thought she would not be taken from me. Madeleine Renard was telling me this morning," continued Olga musingly, "of a celebrated clairvoyant whom all Paris consults; Alexandre I think is his name.

She could easily get the address for me if I liked. But how to get at him? Whom to go with?"

"Mademoiselle Eugénie would come; we'll manage it," said Milly, "but don't name it to any one. If it came to Juno's ears, we'd have the house upside down; *cela compromettrait cette chère maison.*"

Mademoiselle Eugénie was consulted that very day on the possibility of her accompanying them to the house of Monsieur Alexandre. The *lingère*, besides being easy-going and good-natured, was glad of a walk into the city, which was to her almost as great a treat as a box at the opera would have been to the young conspirators.

Stitch, stitch, all the week round, and on Sunday keep guard in place of the mistress whose turn of *sortie* it was; such was the dull round of the *lingère's* life. A walk down the Champs Elysées, or on the gay Boulevards, was a glimpse of Arcadia to her, and whenever Miss Jones was prevented going with the English pupils, they were always glad to ask leave for Mademoiselle Eugénie to fill her place. Youth

is kindly in spite of its unthinking selfishness, and wants only the right card touched to bring out sweet tones of sympathy. It was thought well not to mention the lieutenant to her just yet.

"One thing at a time," advised Henrietta to her more impetuous friend; "perhaps after all we may not see him again, and there is no need to talk unnecessarily about it."

"Perhaps you are right," Milly said, "besides it was on Sunday that we always met him, and I fancy Sunday will be the day of our fate. Of course the Magician shuts up shop on Sunday, so we could not see him on the Sabbath."

"That's tiresome," observed Henrietta, "for we shall hardly be able to get leave for Mademoiselle Eugénie to come out on a week-day."

"We must trust to our stars for that," was the encouraging reply.

But it was a serious check to Milly, this unlooked, for obstacle. The *lingère* took for granted the walk was meant for Sunday, and at once acceeded. Milly had undertaken to get Miss Jones to keep

guard on the plea of letting Mademoiselle Eugénie get the fresh air for a bad headache. However, it was only a check, and Milly had great faith in her stars.

"This is Wednesday, parlour day, I must tell Madeleine to get the address from some of her people; but now that I think of it, we need not speak to her at all, they are sure to have a Directory at every stationer's, as they have in London. We can find out all we want without letting that little fox suspect what we are at. She is capable of peaching the first time she came to a row with either of us."

"You are right," replied Henrietta, "it will save time as well. We should wait till next parlour day for an answer, and that would prevent our attempting to see Alexandre this week."

Next morning Olga looked anxiously for the arrival of her two friends in the cloisters, where she was waiting for them the moment the first breakfast was over. On the way out from their own meal of *café au lait*, they stopped and told her of Mademoiselle Eugénie's ready consent, but the unlikelihood of her getting out

except on Sunday, unless some good genius interfered in their behalf. They were interrupted by the arrival of Madame Laurence. The *maîtresse de première* seemed more *affairée* than usual, and fluttered up to the little group with an increased nervousness in her manner.

"Mesdemoiselles," she said, "je vous recommande le plus grand calme dans la maison ce matin; Madame St. Simon est souffrante; elle ne se levera pas."

The announcement gave some surprise, but no pain. Madame St. Simon had never tried to win her pupils' affection; she was satisfied with being respected, or feared, it mattered not which, as long as she was obeyed.

Her presence shed no sunshine amongst them, and her absence left no void; she was not disliked by her pupils, for on the whole she was a just woman, as far as a thoroughly worldly-minded woman can be just; she never did an unjust thing unless it was necessary to her interest. To Madame St. Simon, a sacrifice of self-interest to principle betrayed an intellectual weakness which she despised in others,

and avoided in her own conduct, as a dangerous error of judgment. She was not altogether without heart; she could be moved by physical suffering if it came before her, and would relieve it where the act involved no personal sacrifice.

To moral pain she was less compassionate. If the suffering came direct from the hand of Providence, such as the death of those we love, it should be accepted as an inevitable decree against which there was no appeal; consequently repining was useless, and bespoke a character wanting in strength of endurance and fortitude. If the bruised heart were victim of the world's unkindness, or smitten with the cold blast of ingratitude, then the strong-minded woman pronounced the sufferer unfortunate in being afflicted with an over-sensitive nature, whose tenderness was a sort of mental infirmity, to be pitied in proportion as it was vigorously struggled against. There may have been a small dose of practical philosophy in such a creed, but it could not boast one particle of the Christian's resignation. There was no shade under its branches where the weary might sit

down and rest, footsore and tired on the journey homeward. No one ever thought of going to this clear-headed woman of the world for comfort or for pity, but many would ask her advice on matters of business. The counsel of her keen intelligence in all concerns often proved of real value; she would give it kindly too, and enter frankly and cordially into the subject submitted to her. She was capable of some personal exertion to serve those who paid her the flattering homage of so consulting her, and would write any amount of letters, or otherwise use her influence to forward their views. She was glad when her friends (or those intimate acquaintances who passed current for friends) succeeded, and pleased when any piece of good luck befell them. She was not jealous of other people's prosperity, unless it involved some diminution of her own. She had a smile for the happy and successful, but no sorrow could steal a tear from that cold, bright eye. Like the Pagan Olympia of old, every joy, every triumph, every hope could find a tutelar deity there; but the votary of grief might search the Temple

in vain for a shrine whereon to offer up his agony.

Her appearance in the school-room was a rare occurrence, and took the importance of an event at Belle-Vue; still her presence hovered about the classes, for she passed frequently up and down the cloisters on one pretext or another, and her pupils knew that she might come upon them at any moment. That possible visitation acted like a spell, and diffused unconsciously a spirit of order and comparative quietness over their noisy precincts.

There was no venturing an *escapade* out of their respective *salles d'études* at undue seasons, while the firm, quick step of the mistress was likely to strike on the marauder's ears. To the many, therefore, the fact of her being safely confined to bed for one whole day, brought a sense of relief like the removal of the sword to Damocles.

To Miss Jackson it came like the trick of some kind fairy; the difficulty of getting out Mademoiselle Eugénie was solved. Miss Jones would do the *surveillance* at the *solfége* lesson, and allow the *lingère* to

take her place at the promenade. No questions would be asked by Madame St. Simon, nor was it likely any one, either mistress or scholar, would volunteer information to her on the subject. By tacit consent, everybody avoided a word or a look that could compromise the other with the redoubtable Juno.

Miss Jackson went instantly in search of Miss Jones. The governess was taking her customary walk up and down the parlour-boarders' corridor with a book in her hand, repeating vigorously several trite idioms she had culled from its pages. Milly spoke to her in French; this was sure to elicit a cheerful nod of approbation from Miss Jones.

"Poor Mademoiselle Eugénie has such a bad headache," she began, "I thought a walk would do her good, if you would not mind letting her come with us?"

"Not the least, if it interfere with none of her duties. Is she on guard this morning?"

"Yes, at twelve o'clock; she is to replace Madame Emeline, who must receive for Madame St. Simon if any visitors call;

but if you will kindly take her place there, that will be no obstacle. You know Monsieur Béranger always talks as much as he sings, so it would be a French lesson to you, and put you *au courant* of technicalities that you won't find in those musty old books."

"Thank you, my dear, that is thoughtful of you," replied Miss Jones, with a grateful smile. "Yes, I shall be delighted to allow Mademoiselle Eugénie to have the walk in my place."

Milly felt a pang of remorse. There is something in genuine truth that makes hypocrisy shrink before its glorious brightness. Not that Miss Jackson was in the true sense of the word a hypocrite, but she was acting the hypocrite now, and Miss Jones' frank credulity struck her with a sense of shame. Her first impulse was to disown the thanks she had so unworthily elicited, but with it came the thought, "If I say a word it is all up with our scheme for Olga, and that would disappoint her so."

The paltry excuse passed for an act of self-sacrifice to her friends; it would be

unkind to spoil their fun, and after all there was no harm in what they were going to do. Then old Jo was such a goose about the idioms.

The bell that announced Monsieur Béranger's arrival was the signal for the departure of the three young ladies, accompanied by the complaisant *lingère*. They had some difficulty in procuring the somnambulist's address, for although every one knew him by name, no one knew where he was to be found.

Their first attempt was at a stationer's; but the great man's avocation not being recognised amongst the learned professions, they had no clue in the Directory as to his being one of the many Monsieur Alexandres who figured in its columns.

"Ces demoiselles would do well," the man of books suggested, "to take information chez le commissaire de police."

If a Frenchman loses his tooth-pick, his first hope of recovery is directed to the *commissaire de police*. If he quarrels with his washerwoman or his wife, he seeks redress at the hands of the same functionary.

In any perplexity of mind or body, he turns to the *commissaire de police.*

But the English *demoiselles*, not being conscious of that dignitary's wonderful resources, turned rather scornfully from the advice. They were growing disheartened. It might have been better to trust Madeleine Renard at first; they would be driven to do it eventually, and then goodness alone knew when they might be able to get out again, so as to take advantage of her directions.

"I have no luck," exclaimed Olga, despondingly, "but I did not expect any to-day, I met a crow as we came out."

"If you met a goose you'd have been better met," was Milly's consolatory remark.

"Have you anything to suggest?" she demanded querulously of Henrietta Wilson, who seemed placidly indifferent to the success or failure of their search.

"I suggest that we have a walk in the Tuileries. We are not likely to do much more to-day; we have lost half-an-hour already hunting after the needle in the bundle of straw."

"Mademoiselle Henriette a raison," put in the *lingère*, consulting her watch, "it is past ten, and it takes a full half-hour to walk from this home; so we really have no time, in any case, to go to the clairvoyant's. We can have a promenade in the *grande allée*, or sit down, as you like."

They were standing under the arcades of the Rue de Rivoli, and looked all four the picture of uncomfortable indecision.

"It's very provoking," declared Olga, "but I always have the *guignon*. I guessed we should not find him out."

"You guessed nothing of the sort," snapped Miss Jackson, "or why didn't you ask little Renard for his whereabouts? But there's no use standing here; we may as well go home for want of better fun."

Passing the Rue Royale, they met a grand military funeral *cortége* approaching the Madeleine. The church was draped with black outside, and hung with rich armorial bearings; through the open doors they could see the Bengal lights flickering in the distance. As the hearse passed them, they saw the regimental insignia laid

upon the pall, which told the last honours were being paid to a marshal of France.

"There will be glorious music at the Mass—suppose we turn in for it?" suggested Milly, brightening up. There was a willing assent from her companions. "Has any one money to pay for the chairs?" she inquired. "I have not a sou."

"I have plenty," exclaimed Henrietta, drawing out a delicately carved *portemonnaie*, from which she took a five franc piece. They hurried on to the church, and pushed their way to a row of empty chairs. The *quêteuse* had no change; she passed on to other customers.

"What's to be done?" whispered Henrietta of Mademoiselle Eugénie.

"There is a cake shop close at hand, *attendez*, I'll run across and get the change," and so saying she darted off to the pastrycook's.

"Will *ces demoiselles* do me the honour to accept the hospitality of my regiment, who are too happy to offer them even so slight a proof of admiration and respect."

Henrietta crimsoned to the roots of her hair; Milly gave a slight start, as turning

round she recognised in the speaker the handsome officer in the hussar uniform. There was no time either to refuse or accept, for the stranger, bowing as a Frenchman only can bow, pointed to four chairs in front of them and turned away. They stood irresolute for a moment.

Milly was the first to speak.

"We may as well sit down; he's gone, and will never know whether we stood on our dignity or not, and the chairs are paid for."

The *quêteuse* came up to the group, and addressing Olga as the most French-looking of the trio: "C'est le frère de mademoiselle qui a payé," she said, half in inquiry, half in invitation to them to be seated.

"C'est très-heureux," answered Milly, evading a direct lie, which she always preferred doing when convenient.

Just as they were seated, Mademoiselle Eugénie returned with the change. She took for granted they were sitting on credit, and would pay when the old woman came their side again.

The wolf had passed while the shepherd

was absent; but the sheep told no tales. Each sat wondering in silence which of the three might claim the lion's share in this graceful act of gallantry.

They looked curiously round to see if their host, as he had constituted himself, had really disappeared, or if he was lurking in the neighbourhood; but they could see no sign of him. Perhaps there was a slight disappointment in the discovery; however, the young ladies kept it to themselves.

They had met the handsome officer, and he had spoken to them, and expressed in the name of his regiment his admiration and respect. He had ventured on no common place personalities, he had as it were put himself individually out of sight, lest it might startle their timidity, and prevent their accepting his deferential assistance. There was something chivalrous in this, and in his vanishing so suddenly from their presence. Such a perfect gentleman as he seemed too!

They were pondering over the romantic little adventure when the *quêteuse* came behind Olga's chair, and handed her a card

on which was written in pencil the list of the music to be performed that day. "Monsieur told me to take this to Mademoiselle, it is the programme."

"Thank you." Olga took it without comment; Mademoiselle Eugénie was separated from her by Henrietta and Milly, and too busy looking about her to notice the act; she supposed the *loueuse* came to be paid.

This singling out of her was very perplexing. Did the dark-eyed hussar tell the old woman to do so, or was it a fancy of her own? She longed to ask, but dared not, lest she should rouse the suspicions they were all anxious to avoid. Perhaps her companions guessed what she was thinking of. There was no doubt they shared her curiosity.

"I suppose the old crone thinks you look more akin to her own species," explained Milly, in answer to her own thoughts, while unconsciously answering Olga's, "she takes you for his sister because you look more Frenchified than we do."

"I wonder if he told her I was his sister" mused Olga.

"It was a very delicate way of account-

ing to the *quêteuse* for his interference," replied Henrietta. "I dare say he pointed to us all, without singling any one in particular, merely saying his sister and her friends were in want of chairs. He could not have seen your face, for he must have been behind us when we were discussing about the change, and so overheard what we said. Dear me, I hope he didn't hear you call the *loueuse* stupid and spiteful, Milly. I wouldn't for the world!"

"Why not?"

"It might have hurt his feelings, she being French."

This was a view of the question that would never have struck Miss Jackson.

"What a sweet uniform it is! so becoming, the blue and silver. Don't you wish he may come back?" Henrietta exclaimed, looking unutterable things at her companion.

"Well, I'm afraid he wouldn't be much fun," was the unsentimental rejoinder, "If he'd been up for a lark, he would not have bolted like that."

"You have the oddest way of talking," replied Henrietta, with a look of disgust;

"nothing is sacred to you; the sweetest poetry of life you translate into slang; you have no higher aim in existence than seeing the fun of it."

"That's more than I'm likely to do with you!" was the impudent retort.

"Let me look at the programme, Olga," Henrietta said, stooping across her saucy neighbour. Olga handed it to her. She looked intently at the writing, as if hoping to discover in it some trace of the writer's name or character. Mechanically turning the card in her fingers, she beheld on the other side, printed in the usual form:

Adrien de Perronville,
Lieutenant au 2ème Hussards.

She slipped the card into her pocket, and made no remark.

Miss Jackson did not relish the turn things had taken. It was evident to her she was not the object of attraction to the hussar, and it did not enter into her notion of fun to play daisy-picker to her pretty neighbour. She was satisfied Olga was the magnet that drew the needle, and felt vexed with her for carrying off the prize before they had fairly started on the

race. It was unfair, she said inwardly, looking at Olga's Tartar-like beauty, and felt aggrieved at its power that made conquest so easy. Olga, unconscious of the bitter feeling she had so unwittingly provoked, was absorbed in the sweet strains that the organ and military orchestra were alternately pouring forth. Mozart had put the handsome gentleman out of sight; she had ceased to think of him or of his message. There was no mistaking the look of rapt delight in her face, Miss Jackson saw it, and her bitter thoughts began to melt away. "Olga," she whispered, "I'm not savage with you, you could not help it, and I don't wonder he fell in love with you; I would myself, if I were a man."

"Who fell in love with me?" asked Olga, mystified; she was miles away in dreamland, with the heroes of song.

"The hussar of course; has he left no wound in your heart?"

"No," and she looked too frank to be doubted; "indeed I hardly looked at him. I don't fancy he saw me, for it was to Henrietta he spoke."

"Yes, so it was," assented Milly, "and

Henrietta is just out of her mind about him. She's not the girl I could fancy a man like that being spoony on, though; she's so ridiculously lackadaisical and die-away."

"She is very pretty," said Olga, "and that's all he saw. Is it not too bad we missed our chance of seeing that wizard?" she continued, her thoughts wandering to a more interesting theme. "It may be so long before we are able to get out again."

"Don't be downhearted," consoled Milly, "I'll manage it somehow. We must get the address from Madeleine; we can say we want it for a friend in town that wishes to consult him."

"Mesdemoiselles, it's time to move," broke in the little *lingère;* "you must be at home by a quarter to twelve, and it's past eleven already."

The three girls rose reluctantly.

"What a pity to leave before the band goes!" exclaimed Henrietta. "I was in heaven during that Requiem, weren't you, Milly?"

"No," replied her matter-of-fact companion, "I was talking to Olga."

They extricated themselves slowly from the crowded church, and were again in the sunshine of the clear winter's morning.

Henrietta Wilson in her slow, *nonchalant* way lingered a little behind her companions. Monsieur de Perronville came up to her and inquired if she had enjoyed the music.

"Oui, Monsieur, grâce à vous," she replied, with a deep blush that gave her pretty face a brightness it lacked in repose. "I am too happy, Mademoiselle," he said, "to have been allowed the privilege of rendering the trifling service to so charming a person. This day shall be a memorable one in my life; I feel that my destiny hangs on it. Do not go, I implore you," he added impetuously, as she attempted to pass on, "without one word that I may treasure as a ray of hope; say, shall I not see you again?" Henrietta was growing nervous; the others might miss her and turn round. Then she had not expected so sudden a solution of her own hopes and fears; this taking her heart and will by storm was a stronger measure than she was prepared for.

"Monsieur, I beseech you leave me," she pleaded, raising her large blue eyes, that fell again as they met his glance of undisguised admiration. "If I am seen speaking to you!"—and she looked the picture of girlish modesty and terror.

"Your name, you cannot refuse that?"

She gave it in a trembling whisper, and fluttering like a frightened bird, brushed past him. Another second, and it would have been too late. Mademoiselle Eugénie turned to speak to her charge, and descried her hurrying up to her companions, who had crossed the Place, and stood waiting for her.

"What have you been lagging behind for?" inquired Miss Jackson, eyeing her curiously. She took no notice of the question, but turned to the *lingère*, saying:

"I had to stop to fasten my boot-lace; the tag was broken, and it took me so long to manage it with a pin."

The excuse satisfied the unsuspecting *chaperon*, but not so Miss Jackson.

"*I* was not born yesterday, Henrietta," she muttered in English to the delinquent.

Miss Wilson pretended not to hear the interesting announcement, but walked all the way home close to Mademoiselle Eugénie, leaving Olga and Milly to keep company to each other.

Henrietta did not know whether she was intensely happy or something the reverse; her heart beat quicker as she recalled the impassioned tone and looks of the handsome Frenchman. Yet, with the thrill of gratified pride and tenderness, came a warning voice she sought in vain to stifle.

It was not the way an English gentleman would have sought to know her, or to win her love; but then foreigners were so different, so much more imaginative. Besides the circumstances were peculiar; if he had not taken that bold step, and introduced himself, he might never have been able to approach her in the ordinary humdrum way prescribed by society. Of course he would soon ask to be presented to her guardians, that he might lay his hopes at their feet, and claim before the world the object of his idolatry. In the meantime he must seek to win her heart, so as to ensure his success with her family,

and seize every occasion of meeting her, and burning the incense of his adoration at her feet.

What a dream of happiness it was!

How different existence seemed within that last short hour!

How bright had grown its aspect—how suddenly the dull *ennui* had vanished with the weariness that hung over the monotonous routine of her life!

Had he followed her to see where she lived? Was he stealing furtively amongst the trees around the *cafés chantants*, and so keeping pace with the *lingère* and her trio? She fancied he was, and longed to look round to make sure of the fact; but that might attract her companion's notice, so she prudently forbore satisfying her curiosity.

In this train of thought she reached Belle-Vue. The *déjeûner* bell was ringing. Mademoiselle Eugénie and Olga ran through the cloisters to put away their things in the dormitory, while the two parlour-boarders went up to their own rooms. Milly's was Number 4, and nearer the landing than Henrietta's; she reached

it some seconds before her lazier friend appeared in the corridor. Henrietta was passing her by, when Miss Jackson caught her by the arm:

"Come in for a moment, I want to speak to you," she said, pushing her door open.

"I can't wait now, Milly, I have to arrange my hair, you heard the bell ring. Let me go."

"No, I won't let you go," was the resolute reply, and the pressure grew tighter on the small wrist. "Whom do you want to dress your hair for? Blue coat is not to breakfast here, unless you've invited him, perhaps?"

"You want to get me a *mauvais point*, Milly; you know very well how it annoys Madame St. Simon when we are late," and Henrietta strove to extricate herself from the tightening fingers.

"Madame St. Simon happens to be in bed, *belle scrupuleuse*, so you need not fret about her august displeasure. Madame Laurence is not so exacting."

This fact Henrietta had forgotten. She had no other reason to give for refusing to wait and hear what her tormentor wished

to say; so, making a virtue of necessity, she replied:

"Oh I forgot that; then come in;" and they entered together. Miss Jackson locked the door and placed herself against it, as if she feared her unwilling listener might escape through the key-hole.

"What did blue coat say to you?" she began.

"What he said to you; to us all three; you were as near him as I was when he spoke to us," replied Henrietta sharply.

"You may use the first person singular, it will be more to the purpose. When he spoke to you in our presence I heard what he said; I did *not* hear what he said when you tarried at the gate to speak to him. I should like to have that pleasure second hand, if you please."

"Did she see us, or is she guessing?" thought Henrietta.

"I don't know what you are talking about," she added aloud; "I consider you are taking a great liberty in calling me to account in this manner;" but her voice had a nervous tremor in it that satisfied

her inquirer there was something to fear, something to hide.

"Henrietta," she continued, "when we planned this spree together, I understood it was to be a spree, and no more, that we were to enjoy the fun together, and share the scrapes if it brought us into any. You don't seem willing to keep the bargain, so I draw out of it. You may sail in your own boat, and steer it the best way you can; I won't peach on you, but I won't help you. I thought we were good chums; it seems I was mistaken."

She left her post against the door, and put her hand on the key to unlock it, "Stop, Milly," Henrietta entreated, in a low voice. There were steps along the passage. "Don't let us quarrel, I will tell you everything."

She did not want to make an enemy of Miss Jackson, though she believed her too honourable to "peach," as that young lady expressed it; but she knew how difficult, if not impossible, it would be for her to carry on either correspondence or acquaintance of any sort with her admirer, if Milly withdrew the aid of her shrewd head and ready

apropos. To avoid her observation was equally impossible, so she judged it better to secure her help by making her a confidante. Perhaps Miss Jackson was keen enough to guess the train of reasoning that led her to that resolve, for she answered proudly:

"No, Henrietta, I don't want to force your confidence. There's no need for us to quarrel, though; we can be good neighbours, if we are no longer sworn friends."

"Milly, don't speak to me so coldly. I value your friendship beyond everything except—" she stopped and burst into tears.

Miss Jackson had a supreme contempt for scenes. It was a chronic complaint of Henrietta's, with which she had no sympathy. At any other time she would have turned away in hard-hearted disgust, but there was real feeling in this one; the girl's heart was full, and she wept genuine tears; Milly was not proof against their honesty.

"Well, I'm sure *I* don't want to quarrel," she protested, "and I said nothing to hurt you, or at least I didn't mean to do so. Sit

down and leave off crying, there's a dear, do."

She sat down herself, and her friend did the same.

"Monsieur de Perronville stopped me at the gate," Henrietta began.

"Monsieur de Perronville!" echoed Miss Jackson in surprise—"is that his name? How did you find it out?"

"The programme he sent us was written on the back of his card. Olga didn't notice it, I suppose." She drew the card from her pocket, and handed it to Milly.

Adrien de Perronville,
Lieutenant au 2ème Hussards.

Miss Jackson kept her eyes on the name long enough to have learnt one three times its length by heart.

"He must have been watching us all the time," Henrietta continued, "for, the moment you three passed, he stepped out from behind one of the pillars; you know, in front of the church. He asked me how we liked the music, and said what a privilege it was to have been allowed to assist us."

"Why do you keep saying *us?*" Milly snapped.

"Well, me then, and hoped he should see me again. And oh, dear Milly, if you could have seen his eyes! They are perfectly distracting."

Miss Jackson shrugged her shoulders impatiently.

"Did he ask you where you lived?"

"No, but he asked me my name."

"And you told him of course?"

"I could not help it; he was so imploring; and then I was terrified lest Eugénie should turn round and see him, so to get away, I told him."

The corridor bell sounded, and cut short the confession; Henrietta started up.

"They are at the table already; I must go and take off my bonnet," she said pulling open her strings.

"Take it off here, you can wash your eyes, and arrange your hair here as well as in your own room. And is that all he said?"

"That's all indeed, Milly," and Henrietta plunged her face into a basin of cold water, while her companion made a hasty toilet, sending a boot flying over the bed, the missile unceremoniously flattening Henrietta's bonnet against the wall.

"Honour bright, Henrietta?"

"Honour bright, Milly."

"Well—oh, dear! I can't find my left shoe! I suppose it's a case of love at first sight, and Monsieur—what do you call him?"

"De Perronville.'

"I suppose he intends to come and pop for you to Juno."

This was an abrupt finale to the romance that startled Henrietta's sentimental nerves.

"That never struck me," she replied, "but I hope he won't; it will be time enough when my guardian comes at Easter."

There was something in her manner as she said this that struck Milly as strange; a scared, puzzled expression that passed over her face like a cloud, but there was no time to speculate on it now. They were already late, and hurried down stairs together. Luckily for the late comers, Madame St. Simon's *remplaçante*, the mild, nervous Madame Laurence, was less severe on unpunctuality than herself. She accepted Miss Jackson's apology, and proceeded to

dissect a couple of consumptive-looking fowls, while the young ladies burst into a rattle of conversation. Most of them spoke English; it was against orders, and consequently a great treat.

Madame Laurence was too busy and excited in her *tête-à-tête* with the carving knife to protest against the irregularity beyond a faint, "Mesdemoiselles, du Français, s'il vous plait!" but the appeal was drowned in a din of tongues before it reached the delinquents' ears.

These dutiful daughters were sent to Paris to learn French and their parents paid largely and liberally that no pains should be spared in teaching them; and, to do justice to the teachers, no pains were spared by them; but at Belle-Vue, as I would venture to assert at almost every other school in Paris, the parlour-boarders were composed exclusively of English girls, and they each had separate rooms, in which they passed the greater part of the day, either alone, or more frequently in groups of two or three.

In these friendly gatherings it seldom happened that a word of French was

spoken. Few of them were sufficiently fluent in the language to speak it without more or less effort, and when the presence of no French person, either companion or mistress, constrained them to that effort, it was not made.

It sometimes happened that beyond a few words interchanged along the passages with the regular *pensionnaires*, or a chance word to servants, the parlour-boarders would pass an entire day without speaking French.

At dinner they were too much in awe of Madame St. Simon to hold a conversation. To the few who wished conscientiously to learn the language, this was a subject of disappointment and annoyance. It seemed that in leaving England they had sacrificed real advantages for imaginary ones. They were separated from all that made life happy, the watchful care of parents, and the comforts of home—all this they had parted with, and for what?

To improve themselves.

We have nothing to say against the principle in itself, but much against its interpretation. Properly understood, there

can be no nobler, no safer starting point in life. A principle that will urge us to action, and strengthen us in great and good resolves.

The mistake is not in the desire for self-improvement, but in the standard we put before us.

The young ladies shipped off annually to the continent are, for the most part, furnished with a standard of self-culture too low and too false for its attainment to be worth the sacrifices it involves.

French and Italian are the first items on the long list of accomplishments to be imbibed during three or four years' residence in a Parisian boarding school.

Even the acquisition of the first-named language offers difficulties not suspected by English parents. Their first consideration is to secure, as far as possible, the health of their children, by having them to dine at the mistress's table. A separate room is considered almost as necessary to health as this first precaution. Wholesome food is scarcely more indispensable than wholesome air, and an English mother shrinks very wisely from allowing her

healthy child to breathe some nine hours out of the twenty-four the close atmosphere which forty sleepers, or more, contribute to poison. In summer, the discomfort of such a dormitory, badly ventilated even at the best schools, is hardly to be imagined.

The French think less of fresh air than we do, and undervalue its power as a motive of health more than is consistent with our notions of, I might say, civilisation. In winter the cold brings its own drawbacks, and an amount of suffering to which no mother would consign her child, if she realised it.

These inconveniences are removed by securing a separate room for the pupil, and so constituting her a parlour-boarder. The parent who can afford this extra expense can generally add the necessary luxury of a fire.

So far, Papa has taken every precaution suggested by affection, prudence, and a due regard to his child's happiness. All very wise and very desirable, as far as health and material comfort are concerned, but woefully prejudicial to the progress of

study. The advantage of learning French in France consists undeniably in being surrounded by French people, hearing French constantly, and so inhaling the language, almost as one does the air. From this best of lessons the parlour-boarder is debarred, not inevitably, but decidedly debarred. Nothing but a very highly conscientious feeling, and an amount of endurance and self-denial rarely met with in youth, can induce a young girl to leave the warm shelter of her own room for the cold, comfortless *salle d'étude*, where she must sit on a hard bench with draughts from doors and windows on all sides, freezing her down to zero.

At Belle-Vue there was a stove in the school-room, which was heated for about two hours during the morning lessons, when the pupils were thoroughly warmed, and then emerged bare-headed from the over-heated room into the sharp, frosty air, to catch cold, rheumatism, or tooth-ache, on their way to the refectory.

I say it required an amount of courage, seldom shewn by the parlour-boarders, to exchange the comforts of their arm-chairs

beside the fire for the advantage of assisting at a *dictée*, or an *analyse logique*, however ably it might be developed by the *maîtresse de première;* and so it happened that beyond the obligatory attendance during the out-door professor's lectures, the parlour-boarders seldom made their appearance in the classes. The frank emulation that generally exists between learners of the same age, studying under the same teacher, was thus in a great measure destroyed.

The English girls were satisfied with winning the approbation of *Messieurs les professeurs*, while the French scholars were obliged to study for the lessons of their respective mistresses. French grammar and the ordinary rudiments of school teaching came under the latter head, but they also not unfrequently consisted in a development of the professor's previous lecture, or a preparation for the ensuing one. Of these necessary instructions the parlour-boarders voluntarily deprived themselves.

For the most part they had a piano in their room, so that when by chance rebuked for idling *chez elles* during class

hours, the ready answer was, "Madame, je travaillais mon piano," and the mistress accepted the excuse without further inquiry.

CHAPTER VII.

THE autumn had been unusually mild and crept on into December, as if unwilling to let winter take its place. Towards Christmas, however, the snow set in with exquisite intensity. The snow lay deep on the ground, and the North wind blew with icy breath through the thin, clear air. A terrible time it is, anywhere, such a winter; but who can tell its horrors in a French *pensionnat?*

The hoary tyrant pressed lightly on the parlour-boarders; they had ways and means of abating his rigours beyond the reach of the *pensionnaires* and the ill-paid *sous-maîtresses.*

They had warm clothing, and comfortable rooms with roaring fires to keep their young blood in healthy circulation. An hour now and then passed in the cold, badly ventilated class-room had

no worse effect than to make them appreciate all the more the delight of their pleasant fire-side when they returned to it.

It is wonderful, when one comes to think of it, what an amount of acute suffering children can bear at school, and not sink under it morally or physically. There is no doubt a great deal in the fact of their being in numbers.

Perhaps few would live through the system practised on them singly, who weather it successfully in a crowd. But may not much of the chronic bad health, so common now amongst young women, be traced to this perishing process carried on during the years of school-time, on constitutions naturally good, if they had been fairly dealt with?

It had frozen hard during the night, and the windows were lined with a thick layer of frost next morning, as by the dull light of the candle the *pensionnaires* turned out of their beds, and groped half asleep into the *lavoir;* but the water was completely frozen in the pipes, and no amount of pumping seemed likely to squeeze a drop from the iron tubes.

"Quelle chance!" exclaimed a tiny child of some seven years old, who had stood by shivering while the water was being coaxed up unsuccessfully, "we shan't have to wash to-day!"

And they did not wash that day; nor for many days after. The *lingère*, who sat in a corner of the *lavoir* while the ablutionary process went forward, told the housemaid of the water being uncome-at-able, and desired her, while the frost lasted, to pour it out over-night into the basins. This was done, with the satisfactory result of finding a lump of ice in each *cuvette* next morning. It froze inside as intensely as outside. Some of the more courageous pupils broke the frozen surface, and by a little patience obtained sufficient water to effect a pretence of washing their hands at least; but the great majority accepted the privation as a happy escape from the horrors of soap and water for one day more.

Some of the English girls applied to the parlour-boarders in this emergency, and were hospitably regaled with warm water by those young ladies.

Many who were not on terms of sufficient intimacy to justify their applying to the same source, remained like their French friends, unwashed.

Things continued in the same way for three days more; the frost shewed no intention of abating its rigors.

Something must be done, the *sous-maîtresses* thought; the children could not go on unwashed till the thaw came, and benignly melted the water and the dirt of their frozen skin. Madame St. Simon must be spoken to.

This desperate resolve had been come to by the *lingère*, the *maîtresse de troisième*, and Madame Laurence, as they discussed the subject on the third morning, while the pupils despatched their incomplete toilet in the dressing-room.

Each was anxious to shirk the mission, knowing how all announcements of that nature were generally received by their Superior.

"I think," said Madame Laurence, plying at her knitting, and assuming her gentlest voice to soften the *lingère*, "I think Mademoiselle Eugénie, it would come

better from you, seeing that you superintend the *lever*, to mention the matter to Madame."

"From me!" exclaimed the *lingère*, throwing up her hands and eyes, as if the proposal were too absurd to need further comment.

"Yes, from you," repeated the *maîtresse de troisième*, coming to her compeer's rescue and her own. "The arrangements of the house don't come into our province in any way, and I dare say Madame would think it an infringement on yours if we interfered in this business; we are responsible for the minds of *ces demoiselles*, and you are supposed to look after their bodies."

"Their linen, not their bodies," protested the *lingère*.

"Their linen bears a nearer relation to their bodies than to their minds," insisted Madame. This was a truth Mademoiselle Eugénie could not gainsay.

"But, I never go to Madame's cabinet unless she sends for me," she urged. "I don't see her for weeks together; you see her every day, both of you; it would be so

easy to allude *en passant* to the weather, and the ice, and then bring round about *ces demoiselles* not washing themselves."

She looked so piteously at Madame Laurence that the *maîtresse de première* was on the point of yielding.

Madame Emeline interfered.

"I am perfectly satisfied it would be much better received from you, Mademoiselle Eugénie; Madame has such a high opinion of your order and cleanliness, she will understand at once your anxiety on the point, and think it very praiseworthy of you to exert yourself about it. Besides, *mon Dieu!* what is it you are frightened about? Madame must order hot water to be brought to the *lavoir* till the ice melts, and allows the cold water to be used, that is all."

"Yes, and that will oblige the cook to light her fire an hour earlier, that's all!" and the *lingère* nodded emphatically, first to one mistress, and then to the other. They knew well what the nod implied. Still Madame Laurence's kind heart smote her when she looked at the frightened face of the *lingère;* perhaps they might share the

unpleasant business, and not throw it entirely on poor Eugénie.

"Suppose you wait in the cloisters this morning till Madame St. Simon comes to the *première* for the grammar examination at half-past nine; you might speak to her at the school-room door; she would be more tame with *ces demoiselles* within hearing; besides, I shall be there, and if she tries to browbeat you, I'll come forward and take your part."

This was a venturesome promise on the part of Madame Laurence; but she was carried away by her feelings, and did not reflect on her words.

The *lingère* yielded, seeing escape was impossible. After all, if she did not take the initiative, the pupils might tell the tale in the *parloir*, where their black hands would strike horror on the nerves of some sensitive Parisian mother, and bring out an explanation. The inevitable consequences would be a request to see Madame St. Simon, and an indignant protest to that lady against the sanitary conditions of her establishment.

Who was to blame? The *lingère* of

course, whose duty it was to see that *ces chères enfants* were surrounded with every appliance for health and cleanliness. The result would be a violent attack on the said *lingère* for her gross neglect and carelessness, ending perhaps in her dismissal as a peace offering to the maternal anger.

Decidedly, there was no avoiding the mission. Mademoiselle Eugénie determined to have the start of the unwashed ones, and state the case that very morning in their hearing, as suggested by Madame Laurence.

Accordingly, at twenty-five minutes past nine, she stationed herself at the door of the first-class, which was thrown open the moment the bell rang to announce the great lady's approach.

The presence of Mademoiselle Eugénie, there and then was sufficiently unlooked for to account for the stare of inquiry fixed on the thin, white face by Madame St. Simon.

Trembling like a culprit, stuttering nervously.

"Pardon, Madame," she began, "I did not like to disturb you by asking an au-

dience. May I venture to detain you a moment?"

There was no word or smile of encouragement, simply the freezing stare that went on to say; "You must have some good reason to account for this untoward liberty, speaking to me without being addressed." Mademoiselle Eugénie felt she had, or else that look would have frozen the words in her throat.

"I wished to inform Madame that for the last four days there has been no water in the *lavoir*, owing to the frost, and that in consequence, *ces demoiselles* . . . ."

"What do you say?" interrupted Madame St. Simon, in a voice that struck her subaltern dumb with terror.

"No water, because it froze! Jamais il n'a gêlé dans ma maison!"

She looked down the two rows of listening faces in the school-room, but every lid fell under the flashing eye.

No one was brave enough to answer the preposterous affirmation. The mistress swept past her pupils with a haughty bow in recognition of their deferential obeisance. The door was closed on the *lingère*, who

slunk away like a guilty thing to the *lingerie* to mourn over her own fool-hardiness, and reproach the evil counsellors who had falsely persuaded her to take the desperate step, and now left her to bear the consequences alone. Madame Laurence had remained a silent spectator of her colleague's discomfiture, too cowardly to venture a word in fulfilment of her promise. She absolutely asked herself if, after all, it might not have been the fault of the pupils themselves, or Mademoiselle Eugénie, who had not pumped sufficiently to bring up the water. There was such a tone of defiance, of conviction, in Madame's voice! Still the water was frozen in the basins. There must be a mistake somewhere; she would look more closely into it to-morrow morning.

Unfortunately, no amount of "looking into it" could thaw the water which stood in rigid blocks next morning in the little *cuvettes*, dotting the long shelf that ran round the *lavoir*.

Madame Laurence suggested that the basins should be filled at night and brought in under the beds, where they would be

sheltered, and catch some little glow of warmth from the young sleepers nestling overhead. Some of the elder girls adopted this suggestion, which proved more successful than the former one.

The little fry were too small, and too cold, and too sleepy to undertake an attack on the pump before bundling into bed, so they contented themselves with getting the end of their towel dipped into some big girl's basin, and besmearing their little blue faces with the wet corner. No one was sufficiently impressed with the advantages of washing under such difficulties as attended the process in frosty weather, to care about mentioning the matter to their respective parents. It was a part of the school etiquette to wear gloves when called to the *parloir;* but the pupils generally ignored the regulation when it was possible to escape the eye of the maid, planted at the *parloir* door to inspect them before they presented themselves to their visitors. It was found convenient now to conform very punctiliously to this rule, and the most careless of the young ladies appeared on the *jour de parloir*, buttoned to

the wrist as neatly as any ball-room belle.

Madame St. Simon had not thought it necessary to inquire what amount of truth there might have been in the *lingère's* complaint. She contented herself with repelling the impertinent accusation as a libel against her house, without troubling herself to ascertain how far the cleanliness and comfort of her pupils might suffer, in case the libel should prove a fact. It was the business of the four *sous-maîtresses* to see to such matters.

Madame St. Simon by no means undervalued cleanliness; she considered it next to godliness in the persons of other people, perhaps before it in her own; but if she allowed herself to be convinced that her pupils were without water, and consequently unwashed, some step should be taken towards remedying such a state of things, in a word, money should be spent. There was no other solution to the difficulty. The previous winter had been quite as rigorous; the cold had told severely on the pupils, one of whom had been seized during the night with violent pains and symptoms that sent the dread whisper

"cholera" round the dormitory, roused from end to end by the shrieks and moans of the sufferer. The doctor was sent for, and calmed the terrified children by declaring that it was not cholera, but simply cramps brought on by cold. An extra blanket, and the luxury of a hot bottle were awarded every night to the half-frozen girl for some time after, but no precaution was taken to prevent the cold acting in the same way on others.

Monsieur l'Abbé had placed before Madame the necessity of having a stove put in the *lavoir*, and lighted an hour before the school was called, but the suggestion met with so peremptory a repulse, that the chaplain felt it was useless to urge it.

"Young people must be taught to rough it; those who are *élevés dans du coton* are never good for anything," was the principle which justified the system of starving and perishing to Madame St. Simon's accommodating conscience.

The young people managed somehow to rough it with that enduring buoyancy of early youth, the unfailing panacea of all youthful ills; but in how many delicate

frames did such training sow the seeds of disease and premature decay?

On one, less youthful than the rest, its baneful influence was daily telling with slow but steady hand. Miss Jones, whose altered appearance had struck even her heedless pupils, was now after the first month of unmitigated frost, so strikingly changed that Madame St. Simon could no longer blind herself to the fact. It was Thursday evening, the *premières* were in the *salon* taking tea; even to Miss Jones, the wretched trash was welcome, because it was hot.

Madame St. Simon, seated in her luxurious *fauteuil* beside the fire, watched the teacher's face as she drained the cup eagerly, and laid it down beside her without asking to have it replenished. Poor jaded face, pale with such a sad, toil-telling paleness!

The Frenchwoman's heart smote her.

"Mees does not think our French tea worthy of being called for twice," she said, playfully.

The semblance of a *badinage* from her employer took Miss Jones so much by

surprise that she could hardly believe it was addressed to herself. But the bright eye was fixed on her with a more kindly glance than she had ever met there before. Self-denying in little as in great things, she had not asked for the second cup, lest it might be depriving another of her due. Smiling her thanks to Madame St. Simon, she now held out her empty cup to Miss Jackson, who was presiding over the tea-pot.

"Too late, old lady, unless you like it from the kettle. Oh, here's a cup poured out that nobody has claimed; so much the worse for them, and the better for you."

It was her own cup, which in obedience to the maxim, charity begins at home, Milly had wisely secured at an early stage of her hospitable dispensations; but she did not choose to say so; it would have prevented Miss Jones from accepting it.

"Approchez-vous du feu, Mees," was the next expression of newly-awakened solicitude that greeted her from Madame St. Simon. She took her cup of tea, and sat down near the fire. "You do not look well this evening. Are you suffering?"

"No, Madame," and a grateful smile lighted up the wan face. "I feel a little tired, but not ill."

"Ah, I fear you overwork yourself in your anxiety for improvement; it is praiseworthy, no doubt, and I wish *ces jeunes têtes* would take a lesson from you; but remember health is more precious than learning; you must take care of your health, *chère Mees*."

Take care of her health! What a mocking sound the words had, coming from such lips. The woman whose selfish avarice denied her the common necessaries of life, fire and meat, in return for her honest, devoted labour, tells her to take care of her health! Perhaps some too intelligible answer was visible in the quivering lip that could cast back no word of well-earned reproach, for Madame St. Simon, turning aside, touched a little *timbre* beside her as a signal for the dancing to begin, and during the remainder of the evening took no further notice of Miss Jones.

There is nothing so hard to forgive as the sight of suffering in others, caused by our own injustice.

There is a voice in such testimony of our evil deeds which cannot be silenced, until remorse, that last hope of cure for the guilty conscience, be put to death.

With Madame St. Simon this forlorn hope was not yet quite dead. There were moments when her conscience awoke and summoned her to its angry tribunal, dragging up her unjust deeds into the light of that truth that lies deep at the bottom of every immortal soul. In moments like these, the selfish, calculating woman of the world would shrink within herself, and try to escape the searching scrutiny that she dared not meet with the frank humility of Christian self-reproach, mourning over the past, and honestly resolving for the future. She could not attempt a reformation, whose first act must be an unsparing blow at her own interest. After all, other schools were no better than hers. The mistresses were paid the same salaries as in the best *institutions* in Paris; sixteen pounds a year to the *maîtresses de première* and *deuxième*, twelve to the *troisième* and *quatrième*. Miss Jones had nothing; but then no one paid an English Governess

now-a-days. In many schools they are even obliged to pay half price, and Miss Jones paid nothing; she had, over and above her board and lodging, permission to assist at the French lessons gratis. If the food in the refectory was not strengthening enough for a woman of her age and apparently delicate health, she might, by paying fifty francs a month extra, have her dinner with the parlour-boarders. This was a great concession on the part of Madame St. Simon, who had proposed it to Miss Jones when engaging her; but Miss Jones had declined, from motives of unwise economy, Madame St. Simon considered. However that was her affair, and if her health suffered, she had no one to blame but herself. So sophistry pleaded in defence of self-love, and little by little conscience grew fainter in its pleadings, till at last they ceased to be heard at all.

CHAPTER VIII.

MISS JONES was growing every day paler and weaker, till one morning, on attempting to rise, she fell back exhausted on her pillow. There was no bell in her room, so she made up her mind to lie there till some one passed to whom she could call out.

Her room was situated in the top of the house, amongst the *chambres des domestiques;* the roof slanted down towards the outer wall, so that it was only possible to stand upright on a space of about three feet.

The furniture consisted of an iron bed, a deal table, on which stood a Delft basin and a jug without a handle, a large trunk that contained the governess's small stock of clothes, and did double duty as a writing table, two cane chairs, and two wooden pegs fastened in the door.

The only window, an *œil de boeuf* in the roof, closed so badly, that in wet weather Miss Jones' precaution of pasting an old number of the "Times" against it, did not prevent the rain from dropping through and freezing into icicles along the wall and on the foot of the bed. There was no means of placing the bed differently, except by blocking up the door. Miss Jones had borne it while she could, but human strength has its limits of endurance, and a day came when the frozen limbs refused their services; they could work no longer.

What was to become of her? Where was she to go to?

The poor woman sobbed out loud in her helplessness. One of the maids, passing down to her morning's work, put her ear to the key-hole and listened. The sobs continued—she tapped gently at the door. "Entrez," said Miss Jones.

"Mademoiselle est souffrante?" inquired the girl kindly.

"Yes, Louise, I fear very ill. Will you strike a light for me, please; you will find my candle on the trunk close to you; the

matches are here, on the chair beside my bed."

Louise struck one of them, and groped for the candlestick.

"Is there nothing else I can do?" she asked; "would Mademoiselle like a *tisane?* I could get something ready *tout de suite.*"

"Thank you, ma bonne Louise, I had rather not ask for anything just yet, till I know what is best for me to take."

"Can you tell me what the hour is?"

"It is five minutes past six. Mademoiselle is thinking there is no fire downstairs, perhaps; but the cook will light the kitchen one in half-an-hour, and she can do it a little earlier if Mademoiselle wishes; or I'll ask *ces dames* to lend me their spirit of wine lamp, and we'll boil up some water in a few minutes."

The *sous-maîtresses* had clubbed together and bought the lamp Louise alluded to, in order to heat as much water every morning as would melt the ice in their basins, and enable them to wash more or less satisfactorily.

Louise was the dormitory maid, and thus came to be aware of the purchase made

by Madame Laurence and her colleagues.

Miss Jones thanked the good-natured girl, but persisted in saying she wanted nothing for the present.

"I was not thinking of the fire, when I asked you the hour," she added, "I was wondering whether any of the *demoiselles en chambres* were up; I suppose not, it is too early yet. If you will knock at Miss Mabel's door in about half-an-hour, and ask her to come to me when she is dressed, I will be very grateful to you."

Louise promised to do so, and went away straight to Mabel's room.

"I had better send her at once," she thought, "that poor creature looks too ill to be kept waiting. I suppose she thinks Miss Mabel will be able to do something for her."

Mabel sprang out of bed before Louise had finished her message, and in less than ten minutes they were beside the sufferer. Louise had not exaggerated. Miss Jones looked dying; whether she was or not the young girl could not say, but that she was seriously ill it required no practised eye to see.

"Dear Miss Jones, I fear you are very poorly; Louise had better go at once to Madame St. Simon, and have the doctor sent for?"

"Yes, I fear there is no help for it, I must see a doctor!"

There was a quiet desperation in the way she said it, that struck Mabel to the heart. She stooped down and kissed Miss Jones without speaking.

"You must go directly to Madame," she said, turning to the maid, "and ask if the doctor may be sent for at once."

"Déranger Madame à six heures du matin!" echoed the girl in a tone of stupefaction. "Par exemple!"

"It is nearly half-past six now; but that is nothing to the purpose, Madame will understand the necessity there was for disturbing her, when she hears what you have got to say. Don't stand there staring at me, Louise, but do as I tell you," she added impatiently, seeing the girl did not move.

"Madame is never called till half-past seven. If every mistress in the house were ill, it would be as much as my place is

worth to wake her up at this hour," replied Louise doggedly. "I dare not do it, and I won't—there's not one of us that would."

Miss Jones had not spoken; but a low moan escaped her now.

"I must go myself—there is nothing else for it," concluded Mabel, and she left the room, telling Louise to stay with Miss Jones till she returned.

Mabel Stanhope was a brave girl, with many a crusader's blood in her veins; but as she drew near the door of Madame St. Simon's dressing-room, her heart beat like the veriest coward. She took no heed of its throbbing, but opened the door with a steady hand. The fire was already burning brightly; great logs piled up in the wide chimney sent out a blaze that made the luxurious *cabinet de toilette* look cheerful in the dim, grey dawn. What a contrast the room was, with its soft carpet and rich crimson *portières* glowing in the firelight, to that other room she had come from! The little *œil de bœuf* in the roof was visible at right angles from the window where she stood. The curtains had been drawn aside by Madame's *femme de*

chambre; it was light enough for her mistress to dress without candles, when she left her room at a quarter to eight.

Mabel's knock aroused the sleeper; she thought it was her maid coming with the *café au lait* at a quarter past seven.

"Déjà vous, Jeannette!" she cried, in a sleepy voice from under the downy *édredon* that nestled about her head and shoulders.

"I am sorry to disturb you, Madame, but no one else had the courage to do so," was Mabel's apology, in a slightly sarcastic tone. "Miss Jones is ill, and requests permission to have Monsieur Royer sent for."

"Is Miss Jones so ill as to make it necessary for me to be disturbed at this unseasonable hour?" was the sharp retort.

"Yes, too ill to be kept waiting a moment more than is absolutely necessary. May I send for the doctor?"

"Certainly; and another time, if you should have any early message for me, you can send it by one of the servants."

"No servant in your house, Madame, would venture to disturb you at so unseasonable an hour," with a slight emphasis on the word; "this was the answer I

got when I requested one of them to take you the message."

Madame St. Simon raised herself on her elbow, and pushed aside the curtain that concealed her from Mabel's view; she could not see the face that was turned towards her, but her own was visible enough in the clear blaze of the fire-light that came streaming in upon it from the open door of the dressing-room. It was never a pleasant face to look upon, but now there was an expression in the green eyes that made it absolutely repulsive.

"Mademoiselle, my servants know their duty better than you," she cried, thrown off her usual self-command, "you would do well to take a lesson from them, and learn a little of the respect due to your superiors."

"I am sorry you consider the performance of my duty to Miss Jones a want of respect towards you, Madame," Mabel replied apologetically.

"I hate that girl," muttered Madame St. Simon, as the young girl disappeared; "with all her *douceur*, she has a spirit that would not quail before Lucifer."

Mabel rang for the *concierge*, and putting a five franc piece into his hand, desired him to take a *fiacre* and drive as quickly as possible to the Rue Richelieu.

On returning to Miss Jones, she found Louise waiting with some anxiety to hear the result of her daring step.

"Monsieur Royer will be here immediately. Madame desired me to send for him at once," she said, smiling at Louise's eager look of inquiry. "But we can't leave you here, dear Miss Jones; you will die of cold before you have time to get well; we must get you down to my room. Now you need not protest; there's no possible difficulty in the way except your own *entêtement*, and that I don't intend to listen to."

"The sofa with your mattress on it will make a delightful bed for me, and we shall be as snug as two kittens together."

Miss Jones shook her head, and smiled at the bright comforter.

"I'll let the doctor see you first," Mabel went on. "I dare say it will help him in his treatment of the case to see the

luxurious way you have been pampering yourself."

She looked round the wretched den—it could hardly be called a room; and her thoughts grew bitter as they went back to the scene she had just left.

"Louise," she said, turning to the maid, "go and light the fire in my room and put the little kettle beside it. Get the bed ready for Miss Jones, and then come back to me."

The maid left them.

"You are shivering, my poor child," said the sick woman in a voice, so low that it was scarcely audible; "go to your room, it is too cold for you to stay here."

"My dressing-gown is wadded;" replied Mabel, drawing the blue cashmere closely round her, "I don't feel the least cold. Oh! dear Miss Jones, how you must have suffered in this dreadful place, while we, in our selfish comfort, never thought of you. How unjust it seems!"

Miss Jones laid her feverish hand on the young girl's arm. "The fox has his den, and the birds of the air their nests,

but the Son of Man had not whereon to lay his head," she murmured.

Mabel's heart was too full to speak. She drew the thin, hot hand under the coverlet, and sat silent, in a kind of awe-struck reverence, like one who had been thrust suddenly into the sanctuary while some great mystery was being evolved. And what a sublime mystery it is, that wrestling of the soul with God in the moon-lit darkness of Gethsemane!

"Would you like me to read a little?" Mabel asked, after a pause.

"Yes; you will find it under my pillow."

Mabel knew what the "it" meant, and putting her hand gently under the pillow, drew out the little worn black book that lay, like a talisman, under the sufferer's head. Her last thought on lying down, her first on waking, was given to that book.

It was her one earthly comfort.

What wonder if she grew to reverence the silent friend with an almost superstitious worship!

There was no priest, no sacrifice, no power of oblation to come as helpmate

between her soul and God in its hour of struggle. She turned to the Bible with the simple trust of a child, and in her child-like faith drew strength and consolation from its pages. It was her enlightener in every doubt, her solace in every grief, her shield in every danger; she turned to it now in her sore distress, and listened with grateful love to the words of wisdom that fell from its sacred leaves.

Mabel opened at hazard the sixth chapter of St. Luke, "Blessed are ye that weep .... blessed are ye that hunger .... woe unto you that are rich, for you have received your consolation in this world."

The words swept like notes of divine harmony over the stricken spirit, and a smile full of "the peace that is not of this world" overspread her features.

Mabel went on reading till the *bougie* had burnt low in the socket of the brass candlestick, and flickered feebly in the daylight, struggling through the "Times" against the window. She closed the book, and, on a sign from Miss Jones, laid it back in its old resting place.

"Is the window broken?" she asked,

passing her hand inside the paper. It was crackly with frozen rain-drops, and a keen draught came searching through the fissures.

"Has Madame St. Simon ever been up here, Miss Jones?"

"No. I daresay she thinks I am very comfortable."

Mabel had her own opinion on that head, but made no remark, only blew out the light and sat down again.

"How long the doctor is coming!" Miss Jones said, as if speaking to herself. "I wonder if they really sent for him?"

"I sent the *concierge* myself," Mabel replied; "but even in a cab he could hardly have been to the Rue Richelieu and back by this. It has not struck seven yet."

"Yes, I forgot that; the time seems so long when one suffers."

There was a noise on the staircase—a heavy step followed by a lighter one. It must be the doctor.

Mabel opened the door and stood waiting.

Monsieur Royer was a stout, comfort-

able man, well-to-do in his profession, and cultivating a proper degree of benevolent interest in his patients, no more; not a man to be carried away by his heart, or surprised into any imprudent display of feeling; but when he entered that garret, and looked at the breathing figure on the bed, his professional phlegm was startled out of its placidity. Of course he took for granted his patient was one of the servants, but even for a servant, accustomed as they are in Paris to be stowed away in pigeon-holes, this was cruelly comfortless. Not a scrap of carpet on the cold red bricks for the feet to rest upon in turning out of bed; no fire-place; no window.

But he was there to cure, not to pity. He asked a few conventional questions, and felt the sick woman's pulse.

Miss Jones had little to say. The room told her tale better than she could.

There was no chance, no possibility of cure while she remained there.

The case was one of rheumatic fever, brought on apparently by cold and privation of every bodily comfort.

"Is there no infirmary for the servants attached to the house?" inquired Monsieur Royer of Louise.

"Ma foi, non, Monsieur, ce serait trop de luxe pour nous!" answered the girl, without seeing the drift of his question.

"Mademoiselle is the English governess," interposed Mabel, blushing violently; she thought he meant to insult her poor friend.

"Ah, pardon! Il me semblait impossible," and he cast an explanatory glance at the ceiling that almost touched his head.

"Yes, Monsieur, you could not believe it possible for a gentlewoman to be lodged in such sorry plight! But we can remove Miss Jones to a better room, she cannot remain here."

"You are right, Mademoiselle," he said, looking at Mabel for the first time. What a fair vision she looked in that frozen attic, standing in her fresh beauty like the very incarnation of pure and gentle womanhood!

"She cannot remain here, and if there be a room ready for Mademoiselle, she had better be taken there without delay"

"Oh, yes; Louise and I will carry her down at once."

"*You* carry her!" echoed the Frenchman, bending a look of mingled admiration and contempt on the slight, young figure. "*Pauvre enfant!* I think my patient had better trust herself to my arms; she will run a better chance of coming out of them with her limbs whole."

"Merci, Monsieur," replied Mabel laughing, "though I'm stronger than you think, perhaps you could carry Miss Jones more comfortably."

He would have carried every patient on his list up and down stairs for another such "merci" from those bright eyes, Frenchman that he was.

It was a very bold step to take without consulting Madame St. Simon, but Mabel had no time to think of that. If she had, it would probably have made no difference in her determination.

The medical man asked no questions. It was not his concern. One thing was clear, he could do nothing for his patient while she remained in an ice-house. The responsibility of taking her out of it did

not rest with him. That beautiful *Anglaise* seemed to have full authority in the matter. She was no doubt some great heiress, and allowed to have her own way at Belle-Vue. So Miss Jones being rolled up in her blanket, Monsieur Royer lifted her up in his powerful arms as easily as if she had been a baby. He did it all so kindly; carrying his heavy bundle carefully down the narrow stairs, and laying it gently on the bed.

Mabel thought him the dearest old man in the world, (he was about five and forty). She held out her hand to him, with something like a tear glistening in her hazel eyes, and vowed he was the best *garde-malade* she had ever seen. Monsieur Royer pressed the dainty pink fingers in his rough palm, and thought himself well paid for his trouble.

"If you should ever want a *déménageur*, Mademoiselle, I am always at your service."

"I shall send for you if I do," replied the young girl, with a blush and a smile.

"Pas tant de chance! muttered the doctor, shaking his head. "Donnez-moi de quoi écrire."

He wrote his prescription, and giving Mabel some verbal directions about the invalid, with a pleasant "Bon jour, Mesdames, à demain," took his leave.

Miss Jones had made no resistance to Mabel's peremptory orders for her removal, and now that it was over, she lay with an indescribable sensation of well-being in the warm bed, watching the fire crackling merrily in the chimney. Mabel tucked her in, and managed her altogether in a motherly sort of way, that was in itself exquisite enjoyment to the poor uncared for woman, in spite of her acute physical pain.

Louise went about, French-housemaid like, touching everything with the tip of her *plumeau*, and conscientiously blowing all the dust into the air. When that was done, Mabel sent her to fetch some milk.

Monsieur Royer had said Miss Jones might have a cup of weak tea, and her young hostess set about making it with as much pleasure as haste.

The pretty blue and gold tea-service, a parting present from Lady Stanhope, was symmetrically ranged on the tray round the bright little English tea-pot.

The rattling of the cups and saucers, and the singing of the sooty little French *bouillotte* sounded in Miss Jones' ear like the sweetest music.

No one knows how to manage a tea-tray like an English girl. There is a knack in it, from the making of the tea to the dipping of the cups into the hot water, and then popping of the lumps of sugar into the smoking liquid, that no foreigner can ever catch.

Miss Jones watched her pupil as she went about it, and thought no one had ever done it so gracefully, and wondered it had never struck her before what a pretty, interesting operation it was.

The doctor had said she might have some dry toast, so Mabel sliced the remainder of a *petit pain* that had served the evening before at her tea; she knelt down before the fire to toast it, hard work enough with a French fire to deal with.

A firm, sharp step sounded along the corridor; it stopped, for a moment, at Number Fifteen, but passed on again.

Mabel did not heed it, but the sick-woman did, and her heart grew faint at the

sound. It was Madame St. Simon going to see how it fared with the occupant of the garret; full of wrath against the woman whose sufferings were a living condemnation of herself. Then came the thought, if Miss Jones should die in the the house! Of course the English girls would give the true version of the story in their letters home, and what an *esclandre pour cette chère maison!* An *esclandre* was Madame St. Simon's greatest earthly fear; she dreaded it more than sin or sorrow, and no sacrifice would be too great to ward off such a calamity.

"I'll have her carried to the hospital, if Monsieur Royer says there is danger," she mentally resolved. "He has not come yet. I must tell Fanchette to let me know when he does."

She knocked at Miss Jones's door, and hearing no answer, opened it noiselessly, supposing the governess to be asleep.

The tenantless bed undeceived her on that point. Where was she gone?

Madame St. Simon stood for a moment half-doubting her senses. She saw at a glance that the room had been slept in

the previous night, the candle-stick was on the chair, pushed into a corner, and the slippers lay beside the bed just as their owner had quitted them the night before. The whole air of the room was that of poverty in its sharpest form—cold, comfortless, and stinging. The blast from the paper-covered window, struck like a knife upon her head, as she stood, angry and revengeful under the slanting ice-sprinkled roof—revengeful against the victim of her selfish avarice.

Not one gentler feeling, not one pang of remorse, tempered her thoughts as she turned away.

"Cette petite Stanhope is at the bottom of this; she has taken Jones to her own room, no doubt. Well, I am just as glad. Royer won't see her in this *barraque*."

This reflection seemed to bring relief to Madame St. Simon, and to mollify her towards her daring pupil. Perhaps, after all, it was the luckiest thing that could have happened. She held to keeping up her prestige with the medical man who attended her establishment, and the sight of Miss Jones in such a place as the room

she had just left, would be somewhat calculated to lessen it.

In a moment her mind was made up; self-interest carried the day against self-love. Mabel had braved her as no one ever dared to do, but she would let that pass; it was better policy to act the *femme de cœur*, and seem grateful for her pupil's kindness to the governess.

The resolve cost her a struggle, but it would prevent an *esclandre*. No blow at her own heart, or anyone else's, was too high a price to pay for that. Then when Miss Jones was recovered she could find a pretext for dismissing her

With this palliative in her heart, her face composed into a smile that left no trace of the recent storm, she knocked at Number Fifteen, and without waiting for Mabel's "Entrez," opened the door.

"Chère enfant," she exclaimed, drawing the young girl towards her, and kissing her forehead, "how must I thank you for your goodness to Miss Jones? I am *au désespoir* to see the comfortless room she has been living in. I shall never forgive myself for having trusted so completely to servants,

instead of going myself to see how she was lodged; but with my head full of business, to which no one can attend for me, you can make allowance for my want of thought about such matters; still, it is unpardonable, et j'en suis au désespoir."

Mabel was young enough to be duped by the display of feeling, and believing it genuine, grew remorseful for the angry thoughts she had harboured against her mistress. Miss Jones had no atonement to make; she had seen in her employer's cruelty the dispensation of a Will before which her heart bowed in meekest adoration. Whatever instrument He used, good or evil, towards the chastening of her spirit, it was well. She had felt no resentment against Madame St. Simon, and when the latter held out her hand, Miss Jones placed her own within it, and answered her inquiries as graciously as if the questioner had been her kindest friend.

"You must ask for everything she wants," Madame St. Simon said, turning to Mabel; "I will see the doctor myself when he comes. *Imprudente!* are you giving her tea without permission?"

"Monsieur Royer said Miss Jones might have some," Mabel replied, putting in a second lump of sugar; Miss Jones liked her tea sweet.

"Oh! he has seen her then!" The thin lips grew thinner, and the face a shade paler. Neither the invalid nor her nurse noticed the change. Miss Stanhope answered, unconscious of the stab her words were giving:

"Yes, Madame, and he was so kind! he would not allow Louise and me to carry Miss Jones down stairs, but insisted on doing it himself."

If the speaker had been looking at Madame St. Simon, she would have been startled by the glance of hyena-like hatred that shot from the light grey eyes; but Mabel was busy arranging pillows for the invalid, and placing the tea and toast in her hands.

Then she had gained nothing by her cowardly condescension, the Frenchwoman thought; Monsieur Royer has seen the governess in that *réduit*, and drawn his own conclusions. Well, she must only put a bold face on it, and wheedle him into

believing her guiltless in the matter, as she had the other two.

But she had enough of the business for this day; so with a few more sweet words and recommendations to Mabel not to *gêner* herself in asking everything necessary to make Miss Jones comfortable she took her leave.

The Doctor came the next day, as he had promised, and every day for many weeks longer. He was paid by the year for attending the school, so his visits cost no extra charge, and her pupils took care that no comfort should be wanting to ensure their teacher's recovery.

It was slow, and for a long time doubtful; but in the midst of her sufferings there came to Miss Jones new and unsuspected revelations of love and gratitude that gladdened her heart, and sweetened the bitter cup she was drinking so resignedly. From her English pupils she had always met with respect and consideration, there was nothing very strange in their redoubled kindness now that she was ill and especially dependent on them; but that those rough, unruly French girls who had spared

no pains *pour lui faire la vie dure* as they expressed it, should come flocking at all hours, full of affectionate anxiety, to inquire for her, this was more than she had looked for. With all their thoughtless turbulance, they were kind and tender-hearted. It was fair game to turn Miss Jones' phraseology into ridicule, and to mimic her peculiarities. In the first place she was English, and in the next place she was their teacher. Two titles to the insolence and dislike of every French child, boy or girl, which they never fail practically to acknowledge. They had worried Miss Jones, and teazed and mocked her, till the poor woman grew to look forward to these daily lessons in the *salle d'étude* as her bitterest hours in the twenty-four.

The results of '93' are no where more strongly visible than in the irreverent contempt for authority that seems inherent in French children. They are republicans at heart, every one of them. The fact of being their superior is synonymous with being their enemy. Authority is always tyranny. They rebel against it, and defy it in a way that would be ludi-

crous in the child, if it were not full of fatal consequences to the man and woman.

Miss Jones was too little acquainted with the national characteristic of her pupils, to see in their conduct towards herself anything but mere personal dislike. She was accustomed to say there was "no reverence in them," and deplored the absence of that civilising element in their character.

They had a *laisser-aller* manner towards all their teachers, which grated harshly on her English notions of decorum and respect for the "powers that be;" but they were kept in check to a certain extent, by the *bons et mauvais points* system in force amongst the French mistresses. Miss Jones was not furnished with this aide-de-camp, to assist her in governing the obstreperous *pensionnaires*. Add to this, her stay at Belle-Vue was much less certain than that of the French *sous-maîtresses*, her position was less defined, and her influence consequently less telling with the head of the house.

The children felt all this without rea-

soning about it, and Miss Jones felt it too. She was a sort of safety-valve in which any extra spirit of revolt found vent.

But things were changed now; the ill-used teacher was suffering and unhappy, and that pure under-current of tenderness that forms one of the most touching beauties in the French nature, rose up to the surface in bright bubbles of sympathy and kindness. Even the few who had really disliked Miss Jones, grew full of affectionate pity for her when the news went round the school-room that she was laid up, and might perhaps never be able to appear amongst them again.

"C'est peut-être tout le mauvais sang que nous lui avons fait faire, qui la tue," Madeleine Renard observed naïvely, with a sigh of remorse.

All vied with each other in showing their sympathy and contributing little delicacies for the sick-room. These were brought by parents and friends on the *parloir* day, and smuggled up clandestinely by the parlour-boarders, with notes from the donors scribbled on fly-sheets of

school-books, as mysteriously as if the contents had been the most compromising of *billets-doux*. At first, when Miss Jones felt ill, the children made no secret of their anxiety about her, and kept asking permission during the day to go and see her, naturally supposing that their doing so could only gratify Madame St. Simon, if she noticed the fact at all. But this newly awakened solicitude for her half-starved governess annoyed Madame St. Simon, and affronted her like a personal insult.

The children were not slow to perceive it, and instead of running up boldly in batches of three and four, as they had hitherto done, they stole surreptitiously to No. 15, one by one, evading stealthily the observation of their mistresses, or when detected, accounting for their absence by some unblushing falsehood.

The *sous-maîtresses* had been sharply rebuked by their superior, for allowing those escapades into the precincts of the parlour-boarders, and were ordered to prevent them, under pretext that the least noise in the corridor was prejudicial to Miss Jones. None of her French col-

leagues were duped by this, but they seemed to be so, and acted accordingly.

Had anything been wanting to stimulate their obedient pupils' sympathy for the invalid, and desire to see her, this prohibition would have answered the purpose more effectively than any amount of encouragement. No terror of Racine, or *mauvais points*, could deter them from stealing up to the forbidden ground, while Miss Jones' recovery was held to be uncertain. They crept on tip-toe along the dark corridor, knocking gently at the door, which one of the parlour-boarders was always on the watch to answer. They feared at first that Miss Jones was fatigued by the constant opening of the door, and wanted to forbid the *pensionnaires* coming so often, but Miss Jones would not hear of it.

"Oh, no, let them come in, it does my heart good. I never guessed they cared so much about me," she answered; and so the tapping at the door was kept up briskly.

CHAPTER IX.

"IT is an ill wind that blows nobody good."

Since Miss Jones's illness, the parlour-boarders had been escorted in their daily walk by Mademoiselle Eugénie, a circumstance that met with much approbation from both Miss Jackson and Henrietta Wilson.

They had seen the dark-eyed Hussar once while walking down the Champs Elysées with Miss Jones, but an interchange of glances was all that passed between them. Monsieur de Perronville understood by a significant gesture from Henrietta, that he must not venture any further recognition. So, laying his hand upon his heart, he stood looking at her from amongst the leafless trees, till she passed out of sight.

Milly Jackson had fairly given up the

prize to her friend, and touched by Henrietta's appeal to her generosity, promised to assist her as far as she could in carrying on the romantic acquaintanceship they had commenced together. She stipulated however, that Henrietta was to hide nothing from her; she would get any fun out of it that was going. With an indignant protest against this matter-of-fact view of her *grande passion*, Henrietta agreed that, in return for Milly's friendly co-operation, she was to be treated with the most perfect frankness. As far as concerned her meeting with the gentleman, the young lady kept her word.

She had not expected to receive a letter from him, and when one was brought to her room by the *concierge*, she did not think it necessary to impart the joyful tidings to her friend, and expose her treasure to Milly's irreverent observations.

Henrietta locked her door, and sat down to devour the contents of her precious missive—her first love-letter, and alas! poor, foolish child, her first step towards sorrow and guilt, the very name of which would have stricken her to the earth, had

it been whispered in her ear at that moment.

But there was no mother at hand to warn off the tempter, and he had gained too much power now to be conquered by the vague foreboding that came side by side with her joy, marring ever so slightly the happiness that letter brought her. When she had read it, till every word had grown into her memory, so that she could have repeated the effusion by heart, from one end to the other, it occurred to her that she must answer it; in French of course, her lover did not understand English. Oh! how it mortified her to be obliged to put into lame, ungraceful French, the feelings she could have expressed so fluently, so tenderly, in her own language. Would he laugh at her blunders, he who wrote so exquisitely himself? Henrietta shuddered at the thought. Yet she could ask no one to help her. Milly spoke French much better than she did, and would, no doubt, be delighted to help her as far as she could, "just for the fun of it."

There was profanation in the bare idea! No, she must manage it alone, answering

in a few lines the four pages of hyperbolical rhodomontade, to which, in Henrietta's eyes, all the poetry of Byron and Corneille was pale and passionless.

What an incentive she had now to study! what courage in mastering the difficulties that seemed insurmountable before!

The sudden transition from lazy indifference to indefatigable zeal surprised and delighted her professors; they laid it down as the effect of their advice, and the exhortations they never spared to incite their pupils' industry.

Happy had it been for the infatuated girl, had her newly-awakened energy sprung from no other cause. She studied with an ardour that astonished her companions, and most of all her confidante, Miss Jackson. "What has come over Henrietta?" was the constant inquiry, as they noticed the feverish excitement that seemed spurring her on through the mazes of *analyse*, *rhétorique*, and *style épistolaire*. Nothing was too difficult or too dry. Their astonishment would have been still greater, if they could have seen her poring over her books night after night, when

every soul in the house was fast asleep. Milly had joked her on the absurdity of bothering her head about such stuff, and wanted to know why she had been seized with a learning fit. "Study kills thought," was the sententious reply.

"Pas possible," Milly exclaimed, "I thought they call rhetoric l'art de penser, and you're particularly smitten on that chapter, judging by the compliments Monsieur Belille paid you this morning on your essay, sur la Sympathie; besides I'd fancy your thoughts were too pleasant to want to be killed just now, mais je ne me connais pas dans le sentiment."

CHAPTER X.

THE schism between the followers of Mr. Brown and his more puritanical brother, Mr. Marks, had terminated as proposed by some of the High Church party, in their going to the Catholic Church, accompanied by a *sous-maîtresse*, or occasionally by Mademoiselle Eugénie.

To the greater number, the ceremonies represented some superstitious idea which they neither tried nor cared to understand; the music was beautiful, the sermon preached in excellent French, and the whole formed a pleasing contrast to the cold monotony of their own service. Probably, if the Belle-Vue part of the congregation had consulted their parents on the propriety of thus frequenting regularly a temple of Catholic worship, the proceeding would have been indignantly forbidden, as both dangerous and unedifying. The young

ladies, however, contented themselves with their own consent; and Sunday after Sunday, some five or six of them were to be seen at High Mass, or the afternoon service of Vespers and Benediction, according as the convenience of their chaperon decided. There was hardly one of them who, in England, would have been seen standing under the portico of a Catholic church; but abroad it was different, every body went; they went to hear a good French sermon, and see the pretty pageant, in which wax-lights and flowers were the principal performers. To many, to most, the pageant told no other tale; they listened to the *prône* as they would have listened to a prologue at the theatre, or a lecture at the Collège de France; but there were a few on whose ear the glowing words of the preacher fell with a deeper meaning, and who saw in the mysterious rites of the altar, something more solemn, more divine, than a mere outward ceremonial. Some there were who came away full of longings to know more of the faith which took their soul by storm, while their reason stood armed to the teeth against it.

Miss Jones had assisted once at High Mass at Nôtre Dame. There was no other way of securing a seat during the sermon that followed immediately from the most celebrated preacher of the day. She was too firm in her own belief to be shaken in it by controversy, however able, and too calmly unimpressionable to allow external circumstances to influence her inward convictions; but her judgment told her how much danger there must be in such scenes to others yonnger, more ardent, more imaginative than herself. She warned her pupils against frequenting the Catholic Churches, urging them to write, at least, and consult their parents on the subject. They laughed, for the most part, at her unnecessary alarm, and went their own way, quite satisfied it was the right one.

"What a fussy old party it is!" Miss Jackson respectfully remarked, alluding to Miss Jones's conscientious interference; and her companions agreed with her that they knew their own minds better than Miss Jones did, and were not to be spirited over to Rome by all the preaching and

singing from Nôtre Dame to the Vatican.

Mabel Stanhope went occasionally to St. Roch, or the Madeleine, when an unusually eloquent preacher was announced. Miss Jones, knowing the strength of her religious convictions, saw less danger for her than for any of the others.

Since she had been ill, Mabel had spent every spare moment beside her. There had been much heart communion between the two during that time of trial for the one and ministering charity for the other. Often, during the long hours of the night, when Miss Jones lay still and wakeful, fancying her nurse was fast asleep, Mabel was watching, wakeful as herself, and at the lightest sign or sound from the sufferer, would glide noiseless as a shadow to the bed-side. When pain kept Miss Jones from sleeping, Mabel would draw her chair close to the bed, and sit talking, and trying by every gentle artifice to distract her friend, till sometimes they both dropt off asleep, one talking, the other listening. It happened somehow that the subject of revealed belief was never dwelt on between

them. The young girl shrank from it with a sort of superstitious dread that she could not account for; Miss Jones from a feeling of reverence for sacred things which made the handling of them out of the pulpit, except in prayer, seem to her a kind of profanation. She liked to hear the Bible read to her, and would comment on various texts and parables in a simple, reverent way; but the question of revelation, and the interpretation of its mysteries, she never touched upon. Her heart was at rest in its child-like faith, and no doubt from her reason rose up to trouble its contentment.

The young spirit beside her had lost that blissful tranquillity, and longed to recover it, with a yearning that those only can know who have held the treasure and lost it. If she had sounded the depths of her own heart, she would have seen that this it was which made her shrink so sensitively from discussing the subject with Miss Jones.

"I cannot feel as she does, and why should I pain her by talking of my own feelings, when she could neither understand

them, nor set my mind at rest?" Mabel often said mentally. Had Miss Jones been a shrewd observer, she must have noticed that a change was gradually stealing over the young girl whose sympathy had been to her like sunshine to the frozen sparrow; but the good soul no more heeded it than she did the wrinkles growing day by day deeper on her own face.

Four weeks had glided past since she had been transferred from the attic to her pupil's room.

She had suffered cruelly, and was still so enfeebled as to be incapable of the least exertion; but all danger was past, and she looked forward to being able in a few days to appear at her old seat in the school-room, and recommence her labours, so reluctantly interrupted.

Madame St. Simon had inquired for Miss Jones every day at dinner with punctilious civility. She had taken the trouble of going herself several times to ascertain personally how the invalid was going on, and had been particularly gracious to Mabel in her manner.

"Faire bonne mine à mauvais jeu," was

a maxim she approved of, and practised with a skill and tact that many a diplomatist might have envied. Meanwhile her great pre-occupation was how to find a plausible excuse for getting rid of Miss Jones.

There was no likelihood of the poor teacher's furnishing one by any irregularity in the discharge of her duty. She would work while she could stand, whatever it cost her. To turn her back into the pigeonhole she had formerly occupied, after going through such an illness as she was emerging from, was not possible. Allow her to remain in Miss Stanhope's room Madame St. Simon would not It was against the rules, and her having tolerated it so long was an infringement on them that she attributed to her tender consideration for Miss Jones, and wish to gratify Mabel.

Both were duped by the apparent kindness of the mistress.

They believed her sincere in her expressions of regard for Miss Jones, and admiration for the devotedness of her young friend. When the latter was summoned one morning to an audience in the sanctum

sanctorum, she presented herself before its smiling priestess with less trepidation than she had ever felt under the trial before.

"Ma petite, I want to have a little conversation with you on a matter that interests us both;" Madame St. Simon closed her portfolio, and taking Mabel by the hand drew her to her side on the sofa.

"Monsieur Royer tells me that Miss Jones is so far convalescent as to be able to go out to-morrow, if the day be fine. He says that she owes her recovery more to your care than to his. I know how true this is, dear child, and Miss Jones herself cannot be more grateful to you than I am; but the time is come when I can no longer allow your privacy to be trespassed on, and your generosity abused." Mabel looked up in wondering inquiry. "In suffering Miss Jones to remain so long an intruder on you," Madame St. Simon continued, "I yielded to the impulse of my heart, against every protest of my judgment. Unfortunately there was no room vacant which I could have

given to our *malade*, or I should never have been guilty of such a breach of my duty towards you."

"Towards me, Madame?"

"Yes, towards you, in allowing you to breathe at night an air so unwholesome as to be almost poisonous to one in health. I fear my imprudence has already told upon you, *chère enfant*, although Monsieur Royer assured me from the first there was not the shadow of danger in allowing you to remain together."

Monsieur Royer had assured her of nothing of the kind; she had never said a word on the subject to him, beyond asking if the fever was contagious, or the least likely to become so.

It was an idea that just struck her at the moment, suggested perhaps by the delicate pallor of the fair cheek she was caressing so affectionately.

"But, Madame, Miss Jones will fall ill again if she goes back to her old room," Mabel urged, taking no notice of the motherly anxiety expressed on her own account. "She is still very weak, and suffers a great deal at times; the rheumatic

pains in her back are quite dreadful towards evening."

"I do not intend that she shall return to her former room. For the present she can have a bed in the dormitory; the weather is now so mild there is no risk in her making the change."

"But I am sure there is, Madame," the young girl pleaded; "indeed there is; and it is not the least inconvenience to me having Miss Jones to share my room. It would look so unkind to let her go into the dormitory, when she is not the least in my way."

Madame St. Simon shook her head.

"It cannot be. What would your dear mother say if she knew I had allowed it? You do not understand the risk, and many other reasons that make such an arrangement impossible. All that I can do to make Miss Jones comfortable, be assured I will do. Later, I hope to raise the roof at this end of the house, and make some changes in the upper rooms that will enable Miss Jones to return to hers; for the present she must sleep in the dormitory."

"Then, dear Madame St. Simon," pleaded Mabel, taking the Frenchwoman's smooth hand in her own two, "grant me one favour. Since you cannot allow Miss Jones to stay with me, let me arrange the little room upstairs so that she can occupy it. I will buy a small stove, and a carpet, and a curtain for the window; and with a good fire I am sure she would be very comfortable in it even as it is. You know I always have more pocket-money than I know what to do with, and it will be so kind of you to let me spend some of it on Miss Jones; it may be the means of saving her life."

Had Mabel Stanhope been a little more versed in worldly wisdom, and the ways and windings of self-love, she might have gained her cause with Madame St. Simon. As it was she had lost it.

Her generosity was too stinging a reproach to her superior's stinginess, and that final allusion to saving Miss Jones' life gave the death blow to her last chance of success. The sallow features grew as stony as the cameo that fastened the hard linen collar under the sharp chin.

Madame St. Simon withdrew her hand from her pupil's, and said haughtily:

"You take a strange liberty, Mademoiselle, in offering charity to one in my employment, and dwelling under my roof. I do not require your assistance to furnish my house, or your advice as to how it should be done. It is just now impossible for me to commence the improvements I intend making later, Miss Jones must therefore share the sleeping apartment of her pupils and fellow-teachers. You may make known my intention at once to her; she must leave your room to-morrow."

Mabel dared not trust herself to speak; she would only injure Miss Jones by any outburst of indignation, and further entreaty was useless, if she could have stooped to offer it.

"Cruel, heartless woman!" muttered the young girl, as the door of the elegant boudoir closed behind her, "I'd not stay here an hour if I could help it."

With this indignant exclamation, Mabel went to deliver her unwelcome news to Miss Jones.

"My sweet Mabel, you are very unjust

to Madame St. Simon," was the reproof that met her angry comment on the message. "I only wonder she allowed me to remain here so long; it was a most unexpected condescension, and I can never thank her enough for it; you, I do not attempt to thank."

"I'd never forgive you if you did; but I cannot see the semblance of a reason for sending you to the dormitory, unless that woman wants to freeze you to death, which she very nearly succeeded in doing up there."

Miss Jackson walked in without the preliminary of knocking.

"What's the matter, Mab? you look as mournful as a magpie!" she exclaimed.

"I'm going to write to papa, and tell him to come over by return of post and take me away. I'll grow too wicked if I stay any longer near that bad-hearted woman."

"Miss Jones?" cried Milly, with three sharps in the note of interrogation.

"Juno, you absurd Milly; she's a bad, selfish, unfeeling woman, and I mean to write home every word of her conduct."

"And so get Miss Jones turned out of

doors," said the governess, taking the flushed face between her hands, and gazing with unspeakable tenderness into the liquid eyes.

"Yes, that you would," maintained Milly, with an expressive nod.

"Promise me, Mabel, that you will not say one word about me in your letters that could injure Madame St. Simon," said Miss Jones, "and that you will not make her conduct towards me a reason for leaving a day sooner than your parents wish. Will you promise me this?"

"If you insist upon it."

"I do. It would bring no good to any one, and to me positive harm. Believe me, you exaggerate my grievances. I accepted the terms offered me; Madame St. Simon only stands on her bargain; it was fairly made.

"So was Shylock's."

"Why, I thought you and Juno were as loving as turtle doves," observed Milly, puzzled at her companion's angry tone towards their mistress. "Hasn't she been all benevolence to Miss Jones since her illness?"

"Yes, and I was unsophisticated enough to believe in it," replied Mabel, bitterly.

They were interrupted by the portress, who came to say Miss Jones was wanted *au parloir* to receive some English visitors. This duty, as well as answering and translating English letters, devolved on the English governess.

The visitors to-day were a lady and gentleman, who wished to place their daughter at a French school, and to whom Belle-Vue had been recommended by a friend whose daughter was already there.

Miss Browning was a regular boarder, dining in the refectory, and sleeping in the dormitory. Mrs. Sharp had asked to see her; but on inquiry it was found she had been taken to the dentist's, and had only just left the house. The Sharps were disappointed; they fancied the young lady would be more likely to give them satisfactory particulars about the kind of food supplied in the refectory, and other important details, than they could get from one of the mistresses.

Miss Jones showed them over the establishment, calling their attention to the

cleanliness and order everywhere visible, the brightness of the polished floors, the snowy whiteness of the counterpanes in the dormitory. She made the most of every favourable point, and praised the school as far as she could do so consistently with truth.

"I have no doubt the teaching is first-rate, and all that sort of thing," observed Mr. Sharp, "but I want to hear something of the feeding. What kind of food do you give the young ones?"

"They seem to thrive on it," replied Miss Jones, evasively, "and I don't think Madame St. Simon hears any complaints from the parents. Children don't feel hungry without crying out."

"I didn't ask if they were starved," retorted the gentleman, stiffly, "I asked what kind of food they got. Do you give them plenty of roast beef and mutton?"

"I must inform you," said Miss Jones, addressing Mrs. Sharp, "that I am simply a teacher of English here, and have no voice whatever in the domestic arrangements. I dine in the refectory, and share the meals of the regular pupils. The par-

lour-boarders breakfast and dine with Madame."

"Tell me frankly, then, since you are an independent authority, whether you consider the living wholesome and sufficiently strengthening for girls growing, and accustomed to plain, solid English food."

Miss Jones coloured.

"I would rather you asked those questions of Madame St. Simon. I am in her employment, and owe her a duty which I should be sorry to betray."

"I ask you as a favour," urged the lady, laying her hand on Miss Jones' arm, "to answer my question. You have my word that whatever you say shall be sacred. You can understand my anxiety in leaving my children at so great a distance, to know whether in sacrificing my own feelings I am not risking the sacrifice of their health."

Miss Jones was embarrassed and distressed, but made no answer.

"Just tell me this," put in Mr. Sharp, "Do you get roast meat every day?"

"No."

"On Sundays?"

"Oftener than that."

"Twice a week?"

"Yes."

"What do they give you the rest of the time?"

"Fricandeau, or ragout, sometimes, but generally boiled beef."

"Bouilli, which means boiled rags."

"And what sort of drink?"

"Wine and water," replied Miss Jones, growing very nervous.

"One part wine, three parts vinegar, four parts water." Mr. Sharp looked grimly at his wife. "My good lady," he said, "it appears to me that learning may be a good thing, but one may pay too high a figure for it. This French scheme is no go."

"I fear not," assented Mrs. Sharp, reluctantly.

"Could you not place your daughters here as parlour-boarders?" asked Miss Jones, painfully agitated, and feeling very like a traitor.

"That is an amendment that would suit my paternal conscience very well," replied

Mr. Sharp," but as I have eight more pinafores at home, I cannot afford to pay three hundred a year for the two eldest; I suppose it would be about that?"

"At least," replied Miss Jones.

"My dear," observed the gentleman to his wife, "we must manage to let the young ones 'parler frangsay' by some less expensive process."

"We might speak to Madame St. Simon about it, at all events," answered the lady meekly; "it seems such a pity the dear children should not have the advantage of a year's continental finish; it improves young people so much, gives them style, and that sort of thing, does it not?" appealing to the governess.

Miss Jones had her own notions on that point; but she was suddenly seized with a cold in her head, and so prevented answering.

"My good lady," protested Mr. Sharp emphatically, "if our ten daughters turn out as learned and as good as their mother, they'll be ten times too good for the best man in the realm. My wife never crossed the Channel till now," continued the hus-

band proudly, "and who dare say she ain't a woman of style and ton?"

Miss Jones allowed that an Englishwoman wanted no foreign polish to make her perfect in every good quality; still, there was no denying the Continent was very improving.

"I don't believe in the Continent," snapped Mr. Sharp, "it's a good place for wearing out one's old clothes, that's all."

He had never hankered after this fancy of his wife's, and the result of his cross-questioning had considerably strengthened his previous prejudices.

"I am very much indebted to you, Madam," he said to Miss Jones, "for the frankness with which you have answered my questions; very much indebted."

"I fear Madame St. Simon has reason to be less so," remarked the governess.

"She shall never know from me directly or indirectly a word of what has passed between us; you have the word of an Englishman."

Mr. Sharp held out his hand to Miss Jones, and gave hers a genuine English

shake. "You will tell her from me," he added, "that I have not made up my mind what to do about this schooling business, which is the truth; I expect I'll have to import a French Mademoiselle to manage the pinafores—ten pinafores, Madam! However I promised Browning, or my wife did, which means me, that I'd just look over this place, and I've done it, and very much obliged to you for your politeness in doing us the honors."

"Will you do me the favour to see Madame St. Simon, and tell her this yourself?" requested Miss Jones; "she knows enough of English to understand what you say to her, though she can neither speak nor read it."

"Certainly if you prefer it; though I own I would rather have shirked an interview with the lady; these French folk are generally too much for me. I can speak the language as well as any of them when I'm at home; but somehow they don't take it in here, they're not used to our accent you see."

Miss Jones agreed that it was very odd the difficulty one found in getting French

people to understand their own tongue, when one took every pains to make it intelligible, talking twice as loud as in English, and using the best words in the dictionary.

She repeated the consolatory assurance that Madame St. Simon knew enough of English to save Mr. Sharp from having to commit himself in French, and left them at the parlour door.

On her way up stairs she could hear Mr. Sharp's sonorous voice pealing through the empty room in tones loud enough to be heard all over the house, had the door been open.

CHAPTER XI.

THE change from Mabel Stanhope's comfortable room to the bleak curtainless bed in the dormitory was a severe trial to an invalid still weak and ailing as Miss Jones was; but she bore it bravely, making light of the discomfort, and jestingly reproaching Mabel for having spoilt her by too much luxury and indulgence. She resumed her duties in the school, giving her four hours of lessons, and taking her surveillance in turn with the other teachers.

She was not yet strong enough to take the English girls for their daily walk, so Mademoiselle Eugénie relieved her not unwillingly from that part of her duty. Her evenings she spent in the *salle d'étude*. Soon after the first tea-party, Madame St. Simon forbade her going to the parlour-boarders' rooms, under pretence that her

presence there was an encouragement to the young ladies to speak English; so even the genial cup of tea had to be given up, and, trivial as it seems, there were few small sacrifices more painful than this. But it was made unmurmuringly, and no one guessed how much it cost her. While Miss Jones conned her idioms in the school-room, teaching by her patient endurance of cold, and comparative hunger, many a lesson of self-negation and fortitude to the shivering little world around her, the parlour-boarders were sipping their tea in delicious comfort, listening meanwhile to a novel which each one took it in turns to read aloud.

By way of compensation for their disobedience in constantly talking English, they refrained from all English books, and were guided chiefly by Mademoiselle Eugénie in their selection of French ones. "The Mysteries of Paris" was their first introduction to Eugène Sue, and after that, most of his works had helped to wile away the winter evenings. George Sand and Dumas contributed largely to the stock of useful knowledge thus gained,

dazzling by the brilliancy of their too gifted pens these young and innocent girls, fresh from the pure atmosphere of an English home. Their total ignorance of vice served as a shield to ward off many a fatal blow at purity and principle; but who dare say that many a drop of the deadly poison did not sink into the listeners' hearts, leaving its trace behind like the serpent's slime?

The stories were terribly fascinating, decked in the glittering plumage that genius too easily lends to vice; and this was the literature that Madame St. Simon's pupils fed their hearts upon! As a "lecon de narration" it was no doubt vastly improving, and they had been sent to Paris to improve themselves.

Mabel Stanhope was not one of the favoured hearers of these edifying lectures —her companions had not pressed her to join their *soirées*. There was not a more popular girl in the school, yet, somehow, her presence was often felt to be an undefinable restraint; she never aimed at superiority, or the right to arbitrate amongst them; still the one and the other were

tacitly yielded to her. They went to her fast enough when they were in trouble, but there was something in the clear light of those deep hazel eyes, that made levity or falsehood shrink away shame-faced. They let her into all their scrapes and tricks, when there was nothing in them to blush for, no underhand meanness or selfishness that would pain or mortify others, and Mabel enjoyed the fun as much as any one; but they did not care to let her know the kind of books they were reading just then; her presence in the darkest corner of the room would have rebuked them like a living conscience. Their own was not dead, poor children, but it was silently accommodating; they were conscious of not doing right, but not quite certain of doing absolutely wrong. Had the foul romances that captivated their imaginations been written in English, the words would have burned their tongues from very shame; but French admitted so much more laxity both in manner and matter; then, although unfortunately they knew the language too well to miss the meaning of a single phrase in its literal sense, the very fact of the

language being a foreign one, threw a sort of mistiness over the reality of the descriptions, and stood like a veil between the guilty picture and their gaze.

The culprits felt that Mabel Stanhope could not have endured the sight were the curtain ten times as thick; the cloud that sheltered their less truthful eyes, would have scalded hers like smoke. So she passed her evenings alone; studying, drawing, or reading such books as she might have read before her mother.

She missed Miss Jones sorely; not that the governess was what one might call good company—but she was a good, true-hearted woman, and loved the beautiful girl who had cared and tended her, till Mabel grew to lean upon her love with the dependence of a child. There seemed no likelihood of their coming together again; a month had passed since they had so unwillingly dissolved partnership, and their only meetings were during recreation, in the cloisters or the garden, or during an occasional walk out.

The parlour-boarders seldom condescended to join the noisy group in the

play-ground; it was considered rather *infra dig.* for the *demoiselles en chambres* to join the romps and games of the ordinary *pensionnaires*, many of whom were their seniors in years, and generally far more advanced in book-learning than the occupants of the dark corridor.

It was a bright sunny day in the beginning of March, and the scene in the garden was as bright and pleasant as the day itself.

The school had just turned out for the hour's play and idleness that came between dinner and the *classes des professeurs*. Buoyant and light-hearted, the youthful band came singing and dancing along, making the high brick walls that hemmed in the play-ground, ring with their merry peals of laughter.

The elder ones fell into groups, walking arm in arm up and down under the naked trees that stretched out their grey branches in the sun, with a green bud peeping out here and there like a far off promise of coming spring.

Les mioches, as dignified fourteen and sixteen called the younger portion of the flock, were shouting and jumping and

vociferating in a way that might be amicable for the moment, but looked unsatisfactory if the effervescence lasted long. The question at issue was: what game was to be played? Cries of *colin-maillard*, *cache-cache*, *crapaud*, with mingled cheers and clapping of hands, and very decided tones and gestures of disapprobation, rose high and shrill from the young debaters.

Elbows and tiny fists argued the point with more force than logic, and the combat was evidently waxing warm.

Suddenly they stopped, and as if touched by a common spring, rushed one and all to the garden door, rending the air with cries of: "Vive Monsieur l'Abbé! bon jour, Monsieur l'Abbé!"

There he stood in his black *soutane*, towering above the baby forms that swarmed around him, clinging to his gown, pulling him by the sleeve, and taking all manner of liberties with his venerable person, bold and fearless, as it is the privilege of childhood to be with virtue and high holiness.

They were more in awe of the gentlest of their mistresses than of this white-

haired priest. Self-denying austerity was stamped on his brow and in his every movement, but the children felt, with the true instinct of childhood, that the severity was all for himself, the benign gentleness for them. His presence amongst them was like the visit of a father; they reverenced him, as far as their nature was capable of reverence, but they had not learned to fear him.

The elder pupils, with a nearer approach to courtesy than was visible in their manner to any other superior, came to say *bon jour* to the chaplain. He had a kind word for each of them, but his weakness was for the little ones.

When their garrulous greeting had subsided into comparative quiet, the old man suggested they should go on with the game he had interrupted.

"Non, non, Monsieur l'Abbé, a story, we want a story!"

It was his habit, when he came to see them during the fine weather, to gather them round his knee, and tell them some trait from sacred or profane history, which they listened to with rapt delight; invariably

asking, before the tale began, "Is it a true story, Monsieur l'Abbé?" But to-day it was too cold to sit down out of doors, so the chaplain proposed their running a race, instead.

This met with a flat refusal.

"C'est ennuyeux courir, nous voulons une histoire."

Instead of arguing the point, the good man drew from his pocket-book a small picture, representing the Madonna holding the divine infant in her arms. He held up the image, with its delicate lace border, before the wistful eyes of the children, exclaiming, "Suppose we run for this, will any one try to win it?"

"Oh, oui, moi, et moi, et moi!" came from a dozen voices, and the pout disappeared from every lip.

They scampered off to the gate, which was to serve as their starting point.

Monsieur l'Abbé ranged the young competitors side by side, and clapping his hands three times, gave the signal to start.

Miss Jones and Mabel stood to look at the children as they took their flight like a

covey of partridges, shrieking and panting as they flew.

"Quel joli tableau!" exclaimed the Abbé.

"Yes, they are very happy," murmured Mabel, absently.

"What have you to envy them, my child?" asked the chaplain, turning his keen glance on the lovely speaker.

"Peace," answered the young girl.

Miss Jones started; Mabel was leaning on her, and felt it. She would have given a great deal to call back the word that had escaped from her unguardedly; but it was said, and she could not gainsay it.

Happily, or it may be unhappily, her embarrassment was relieved, and any explanation avoided by the advent of the portress with several English letters.

She handed one to Mabel.

It was no unusual thing, as we have seen, for Miss Jones to be sent for when the English post arrived, and yet her breath came quicker, when the woman said, "Madame vous demande, Mees."

She followed her, and left Mabel devouring her mother's letter.

The return of the racers to the winning post, called away the chaplain's attention, and prevented his endeavouring to gain any closer knowledge of the young stranger whose words had awakened his interest and curiosity.

If Miss Jones faltered a moment at the door of the council-chamber with a vague feeling of apprehension, the reception she met with set her fears to rest.

Madame St. Simon was seated at her writing-table, scanning carefully, and with evident satisfaction, a list of names with a figure opposite each; it was the list of contributions from the pupils towards purchasing for their mistress a present on her *fête*.

The said present was always supposed to be *une surprise*, although every year it was a matter of much discussion between Madame St. Simon and the *sous-maîtresses*, admitted on this occasion to the confidence of their superior, how the money thus raised was to be spent.

Most of the drawing-room furniture and Madame's boudoir had been levied in this way.

The mistress of the first class, it was believed, had adroitly extracted from her employer what trifle she would most willingly accept from her loving pupils. The article was bought by Madame herself, accompanied by Madame Laurence, and when the day arrived, the *surprise* was placed in the drawing-room, where the young ladies, dressed in their Sunday uniform, presented it to Madame St. Simon in a pretty speech concocted with labour by the *première en rhétorique.*

The astonishment and *attendrissement* of the lady were touching to witness. She embraced her *chères enfans*, protesting that she was never more surprised in her life. It was just the very thing she had been wishing for. How could they have guessed it?

Madame Laurence then reminded her of one particular day when she, Madame St. Simon, had observed how dark the drawing-room looked when there was company, with only the two lamps on the chimney-piece, and how Madame Laurence had said what an improvement a lustre would be, and how Madame then replied that she

wished for one of all things, but could not afford it.

At this elucidation of the mystery, Madame St. Simon embraced Madame Laurence, declaring she was a very dangerous person, and not to be trusted in future.

The day was drawing near on which this annual comedy was to be played over again.

The subscription list had been sent round to pupils and teachers.

Madame St. Simon distinctly refused to accept less than ten francs from any one. So the *sous-maîtresses* with twelve or fifteen pounds a-year, and the English governess with nothing, were obliged to submit to the yearly tax, or bear from their superior such signs of gracious goodwill as she knew how to bestow.

Miss Jones had given ten francs like the rest, and it was the sight of her name on the list that won for her the cordial "bon jour, chère Mees," which banished her uneasiness on entering the room.

Madame St. Simon did not know that it was the last of her little income of ten pounds, which served to dress the teacher,

and defray the chance expenses of her self-depriving life.

Miss Jones had asked Mabel Stanhope if she could advance her a little money, in case she should want it before her own came due, and the young girl, of course, promised, urging in vain Miss Jones' acceptance of a five-pound note at once.

"Half my year's income! What should I want with such a sum?" Miss Jones had replied.

"Well, I shall not touch it," said Mabel, "till your money comes; so if you want it, there it is."

There were two letters to be translated, and Madame St. Simon handed them to Miss Jones, that she might have less difficulty in turning them into French.

The first was from an English tradesman, soliciting the honour of supplying coals to the far-famed establishment of Belle-Vue. He hinted at the possibility of sending his daughter Araminta to be finished off there, in case Madame St. Simon favoured him with her patronage. He had heard a great deal of her school from his respected and wealthy friend, Mr.

Huggins, who did an extensive trade in the soap and candle department, and whose daughter had spent six months at Belle-Vue, where she had learned manners that made her the admiration and envy of a large circle at Plymouth.

Miss Jones smiled at this characteristic epistle, and having satisfied herself that she could render it in tolerable French, proceeded to open the second letter.

On looking to the signature, she gave an involuntary start—"Bessy Sharp." It was from one of Mr. Sharp's *pinafores* to her friend, Mary Browning. This was Miss Bessy's letter:

"Dearest Mary,

"We arrived at home only a few days ago, or you should have heard from me sooner. Such a beautiful tour as we have had! although we only staid three days at that most enchanting of cities—Paris. How I envy you living there! it must be delightful. London looks so dull, and Englishmen so slow and awkward after those bewitching Frenchmen, with their exquisite moustaches that make them

all look like heroes and brigands. I have a great deal to confide to you, that could not be said in a letter; but I just write that you may not think I've forgotten you, and to say how awfully sorry Belinda and I are, that pa didn't put us to the same school with you; but he was so frightened at what the English governess told him about the food you get, and so forth. Indeed you must be half-starved, which I lament deeply to think of. Still I should have endured 'boiled rags,' as pa calls your French beef, to have reaped for a time the harvest of learning you cannot fail to acquire amongst the most accomplished nation in the world.

"Adieu, dearest Mary. Write soon to your devoted and attached

"Bessy Sharp"

Miss Jones read the letter three times over, trying to persuade herself that she had mistaken the meaning, or the words; but there they stood in horrible relief upon the rose-coloured paper, glaring at her like a death-warrant.

Was ever sentence more cruelly dealt

than this? She must denounce herself, knowing for a certainty that the denunciation would throw her houseless, breadless, friendless on the world. The judge, before whom she stood, would shew no mercy to her misdeed; the very shadow of such a hope did not cross her mind.

She might have saved herself by passing over the damning passage, without fear of detection. Madame St. Simon never looked at the letters once translated by the governess; but the truthful woman cast the temptation from her with calm and brave determination. No, she had done her duty towards God and her fellow-man; she would not betray it now by a cowardly deceit.

A much longer time elapsed than was necessary for the perusal of the letters, and still Miss Jones stood with the open paper in her hand.

Madame St. Simon, considering she had given her sufficient leisure to digest them, called out, without looking up from her account book, "Voyons! quelles nouvelles d'outre-manche?"

Miss Jones approached her employer,

and in a voice that played false to the steady purpose in her heart, replied, "This is an application from a tradesman, soliciting your patronage; and the other is from the daughter of Mrs. Sharp to Miss Browning. Which shall I read first?"

The poor teacher put the question with a shadowy hope that Madame St. Simon, as it sometimes happened, might refuse to hear the young lady's letter, under pretext of being pressed for time. Besides holding those interesting effusions in slight contempt, Miss Jones's translation was a severe trial to her nerves, and when there was a plausible excuse for so doing, she would cut it short. But Miss Jones' star was low in the horizon just now. The lady had, apparently, time enough to spare, and replied eagerly, "Celle de la petite Sharp."

She had been greatly annoyed at seeing the two young ladies escape her, especially on becoming aware that there were eight more in the rear, as Mr. Sharp had taken pains to make her understand.

She fell back in her *fauteuil*, and summoned all her gravity to undergo the coming ordeal.

Then it was that, fixing her keen eye upon Miss Jones, she saw how pale and agitated the governess looked.

"Qu'avez-vous?" she inquired uneasily.

Miss Jones supported herself against the wall, and, without noticing the question, said in as firm a voice as she could command, "Madame, I have now been eight months in your service; you have had every opportunity of forming a correct opinion of my character and my principles. I may not have been fortunate enough to win your affec ..... friend ..... sympathy, but I am conscious of a claim to your respect."

She paused, in hopes of some sign or word of encouragement.

Madame St. Simon bowed her acquiescence with a look that was expressive enough of astonishment, but of no more genial emotion.

"Have you ever found me guilty of a falsehood?"

"Never."

"Do you believe me capable of a falsehood?"

"No."

"Then if it should come to pass that I must choose between a sacrifice of truth, or of your interest, you would not expect me to hesitate?"

The stare grew colder, and the lips a degree more rigid.

"I should expect you to do your duty by me while you ate of my bread," the judge replied, evading a direct answer to the delicate question.

"I have never failed in my duty to you, as far as I know it, so help me Heaven! but a day came when I had to choose between it and my duty to God, and—I was true to my conscience!"

"What are these periphrases about?" cried Madame St. Simon, her green eyes flashing fiercely; "what do you mean me to understand? You must be dead to every sense of justice and of honesty, if under cover of puritanical fastidiousness you have betrayed my interests or my honour by word or look."

Miss Jones shook her head, but made no reply.

"Let me have an end of this mystification. How does it bear on the letter in

your hand? Translate it; word for word, remember. I shall have it read by another person, and if I detect any trickery, *gare à vous!*"

This last insult gave back to Miss Jones all her wavering courage.

Instead of stuttering out an indignant retort, more ludicrous in her dislocated French than impresssive, she looked for a moment with calm defiance at the excited Frenchwoman, who in spite of her power felt humbled before the penniless dependant; there was the majesty of truth, something perhaps of the Martyr's halo shining from that pale, wan face. Oh, surely, many a martyr's palm was won with less heroic faith!

It was not the ghastly treason of a Pagan sacrifice that was set up as the price of her deliverance; she might have saved herself by a subterfuge, too guileless to be called by the foul name of lie; she had only to be silent, and rather than sully her pure standard of Christian truth by the unspoken falsehood, she would cast herself afloat in the dark, dark night of direst poverty, in a strange land, without

a penny, a prospect, or a friend. Calmly, in a voice strong with the strength of victory, Miss Jones began the letter at the beginning, and read it to the end.

"You told him my pupils were starved," Madame St. Simon said very quietly.

"No, all that my conscience could say in favour of your house, I said. He put direct questions to me about the quality and kind of food supplied, and from my answers inferred that it was not sufficiently nourishing."

"You have robbed me of ten pupils," observed Madame St. Simon with singular coolness; her excitement had either spent itself in the first fiery ebullition, or had been quelled by the deep, inward stillness that seemed breathed into Miss Jones; "you have robbed me of ten pupils; I shall not reproach you, since your conscience does not; but a servant with a conscience so admirably sensitive, is a luxury I cannot afford to keep. You are free to seek another situation. I trust you may find one where your integrity will be duly valued."

"When do you wish me to leave?" asked the governess.

"At once."

"I am, as you know, a perfect stranger in Paris; will you give me a few days that I may look for a lodging before I leave."

"You should have thought of that in time," replied Madame St Simon.

"I did," answered Miss Jones, with touching gentleness.

The spirit whence she drew her strength for duty and for sacrifice faltered at the prospect of hunting for a lodging in the great wilderness without, on credit too. She ought of course to have walked straight away, scorning to ask a concession from a woman she despised, but Miss Jones was no heroine, except where there was a duty to be done.

"May I sleep here to night?" she asked meekly.

"No; you leave my house at once, without holding further communication with any one in it, teachers or pupils;" and the pitiless woman pointed sternly to the door.

"God forgive you, Madame St. Simon," said Miss Jones, "and. . . God bless you!"

A curse would have stung her employer less than such a blessing.

She seemed not to hear it, and taking a ten franc piece out of the subscription box, handed it to Miss Jones, saying:

"I don't wish to keep this; you may want it."

The governess took it without comment, and left the room.

She went at once to Mabel's door, and knocked; there was no answer; she opened it, and stood for a moment looking round the pleasant little room, where she had suffered so much, and been so happy.

There was the pretty writing-desk in which the young girl had put the five-pound note Miss Jones refused.

She might have opened it, and taken the note, leaving a line to tell Mabel she had done so; the bunch of keys was lying on the dressing-table—(how often Miss Jones had lectured on that careless habit of Mabel's!)—but then it might be so long before she could pay back the money. Mabel would rather she never did, but

that was not for the governess to consider.

"And must I go without seeing you again, my own, my cherished one!" exclaimed Miss Jones, the big tears rolling down her cheeks. Sorrow, and the flush of a noble victory still upon her face, idealized its ugliness.

"No, I must see her once more, bless her, kiss her, if we are never to meet again. Madame St. Simon had no right to forbid it; I will see my darling in spite of her."

She hurried down to the play-ground, expecting to find the school still there; but the study bell had rung without her noticing it, and Mabel, with all the other parlour-boarders, was assisting at the *examen d'histoire* in the *salle des professeurs*. It would last an hour, so Miss Jones determined to get ready her few things at once, and then return to take leave of Mabel.

But she had reckoned without her host.

The governess's trunk was still in the garret room, and had never been emptied for want of a better wardrobe. Her books and some articles of clothing in daily use

were soon packed up, and she came down to the dormitory to put on her bonnet.

The long, bleak room, with its double row of bedsteads, had a cheerful, home-look about it now, it had never worn before. Carrying her leather bag on her arm, and an alpaca umbrella in her hand, she went down to the cloisters. She had better wait there; Mabel might dally about the classes when the lesson was over, instead of returning at once to her room.

Meanwhile the porter had carried down the square, black box, and secured it on the *fiacre* Madame St. Simon had sent for the moment Miss Jones left her presence.

Jeannette met the governess at the foot of the stairs, and said, respectfully,

"Tout est prêt, Mees."

"What is ready?" asked Miss Jones in surprise.

"The fiacre, Mademoiselle; if you keep the man waiting, he will charge you for the hour."

She would have paid the hour if it had taken her solitary ten franc piece, rather than go without one last sight of her dar-

ling; but the dining-room door opened, and Madame St. Simon stood, like her evil fate, upon the threshold.

A kind of despair seized the unhappy creature. She would face her tyrant like a stag at bay, and rebel against this last act of cruelty.

"I wish to see Miss Stanhope before I go; if you allow me, Madame, I shall wait here till she passes."

"I thought I forbade your speaking to any one in my house," replied the Frenchwoman haughtily.

"This is cruel—this is tyrannical, Madame St. Simon; I will not obey you," answered Miss Jones.

"Ah, you think to brave me to the last! *Nous verrons.* Jacques!" she cried, in a voice as shrill as an east wind, "if you cannot walk alone, I shall have you assisted."

Good Heavens! did she mean to turn her out by force, like a thief or a drunkard?

No servant in the house would have raised a finger to Miss Jones; but she could not guess that, or knowing it, be be-

holden to their pity to save her from such galling outrage.

With a cry of anguish, she clasped her hands, and casting towards the *salle d'étude* a look that seemed as if it must have pierced through the closed door, walked past Madame St. Simon.

For many a day that cry rang with avenging condemnation in the stern woman's ear.

And so Miss Jones went forth under the bright sky of Heaven into the busy streets of Paris, more lonely to her than a desert, with no solitary human being to turn to for counsel or protection.

Yet not friendless, not alone.

There was One whose faithful guardianship would not forsake her, One Eye that would keep watch over the wanderer, One Heart on whose great compassion she could lay her own aching heart, and be at rest.

No, she was not so utterly alone.

CHAPTER XII.

MABEL STANHOPE was not the only one who regretted Miss Jones, although no one felt her loss so keenly.

Now that the governess was gone, nothing remained but the memory of her goodness and gentleness. They remembered how patiently she had always borne with their waywardness; no one had ever heard a rough or angry word from her. The greedy desire for improvement, which they had ridiculed while she was amongst them, grew respectable when they looked back on the self-denying, unobtrusive industry with which Miss Jones seized every opportunity that came in her way.

There was no explanation given as to the cause of her sudden disappearance, except that Madame St. Simon had detected her in a gross breach of trust, and requested Miss Jones' name might never be mentioned in her presence.

She spoke more in sorrow than in anger, like one who had been pained by some unlooked-for deceit in a friend.

Mabel Stanhope could no more have doubted Miss Jones' truth and honour, than she could have doubted the sun's light at mid-day; but she gave Madame St. Simon credit for sincerity when she spoke so mildly, and with so little anger of her late subordinate. Of course it was all a mistake that could all be cleared away with a word, were Miss Jones allowed to speak it; but, apparently, in her indignation at the supposed breach of trust, Madame St. Simon had dismissed the culprit without giving her a chance of justifying herself.

Where had she gone to, and how was she living?

Mabel knew she had given her last franc *pour la fête de Madame*. Had she left the house without a penny in her pocket?

At any cost Mabel should ascertain this. Taking her courage in both hands, as the French say, she went down to Madame St. Simon's room.

"I am going to disobey you, Madame,"

said the young girl, apologetically, "but I am sure you will forgive me when you hear my reason. Yesterday, when Miss Jones left, she had not ten francs in her possession. She may not have told you so, but I know it for a fact. Will you enclose her this," placing the five-pound note in Madame St. Simon's hand, "with my love, or let me have her address, that I may send it myself?"

There was a pleading expression in the fair face that would have softened a heart less stony than the listener's, but Madame St. Simon was proof against such weakness. She answered, nevertheless, more kindly than Mabel had expected.

"Miss Jones did not tell me where she purposed going. As to her being without money, you may be at rest on that point. I took care she should not leave my house without the means of providing another shelter, culpable though she was. I have said this much. Now remember, you never mention the subject again."

Mabel took back the money, feeling that any further remark or question would be useless.

For days and weeks she hoped every post would bring her a letter from Miss Jones; but weeks, and then months passed, and no tidings came.

The governess had written of course, but the letter was never allowed to reach her pupil's hands.

She had said very little of herself, speaking chiefly of her regret at not seeing her darling before she left, but abstaining from any reproach against Madame St. Simon. She asked Mabel to let her have the five-pound note she had refused at Belle-Vue, promising to return it as soon as her own money arrived. She had written to London, desiring it might be forwarded to her present quarters. She was looking out for lessons, and had already found one, thanks to Monsieur l'Abbé, whom she had met the very day after leaving her old employer. The letter was dated from the Rue du Gard.

Miss Jones did not say that, bad as the living was at Belle-Vue, it was luxurious beside her present fare. She did not mention, either, that the lesson, so gratefully accepted, was paid one franc an hour,

and that it took her an hour to walk to it, and the same back. She would not pain the generous heart that would have bled for her, and helped her.

The letter was almost cheerful, and if Madame St. Simon could have understood it, she might not have destroyed it. By dint of slow and careful reading, she gleaned that Miss Jones was giving lessons. This was a relief to her mind; for somehow, since that morning's work, she had never slept so comfortably.

Now that she knew Miss Jones was safe, and had found employment, she was seized with the desire to assist her by some small donation, and thus lull her own scruples to sleep for ever.

She would do a generous deed to atone for an unjust one. The most sensitive conscience could not do more. She wrote down Miss Jones's address; Madame St. Simon knew the place well. A house where she would hesitate allowing any servant, near her person, to set foot, so total an absence of the commonest attempt at cleanliness did it present.

She had called there once to take up the

character of a maid, and by some mistake of the portress, supposing she had come to see a sick inmate, had been shown into the hall leading to the lodgers' rooms. She recoiled in insurmountable disgust from the stair-case that the woman told her to ascend, and turned without further inquiry from a reality the like of which she could have imagined only amongst savages devoid of the first elements of civilization.

This was the refuge Miss Jones had found, and Madame St. Simon felt it was vengeance enough for every wrong the governess had done her.

She folded a twenty-franc piece in a sheet of paper, sealed it with a wafer, and addressed it with her left hand. Next day she drove to the Rue du Gard, and left it with the concierge.

Having so far thrown balm on the troubled waters of her conscience, Madame St. Simon dismissed Miss Jones from her mind and thoughts for evermore.

The person who replaced the English governess at Belle-Vue, was as great a contrast to her predecessor as can well be imagined.

Miss Lavinia Laventine was small and slight, with a long neck, and a stoop from her shoulders, which she complacently compared to the Grecian bend of the Venus de' Medici.

She had been pretty in her youth, and had never forgotten it; for though fast fading into fifty, her pretensions to admiration were as high as in the sunniest days of her girlhood.

Her father, she spoke of, as an emiment physician, whose disinterestedness and philanthropy had impoverished himself and his family.

Mr. Laventine had been neither more nor less than a village apothecary, eking out a shabby livelihood amongst his country patients, and nursing the dream of setting up some day in London on the produce of their lumbago and rheumatism. But this dream never came to be a reality. He died amongst the village folk whom he had doctored all his life, and mayhap, sometimes dispatched before their time to a better world.

His daughter, Lavinia Laventine, had taught writing, fancy-work, and elegant

literature, to the younger portion of her father's patients, and when the good man betook himself to his rest, she left the village to seek her fortunes on a wider field. Miss Lavinia was a pretty, saucy-eyed brunette in her spring-time, and the great people at the Park, Hall, and Rectory, patronized the merry little girl, as most great county people like to do.

It is not for them to consider what harm the patronage may do the modest village maid, or simple farmer's daughter.

The modesty and simplicity, while they last, make her an unobjectionable companion for my lady at the big house.

Should the ill-advised condescension prove too much for the protégée's head, she is turned out as a forward minx that doesn't know her place. "The jade absolutely had the impudence to fall in love with Augustus, because, forsooth, he took a fancy to her, and did the creature the honour to flirt with her, and make pretty speeches to her! Those low-born people should be kept at a distance, or else they are sure to forget themselves."

Miss Lavinia was given to this sort of

forgetfulness, poor soul, and after being the confidante and friend of more than one county belle, had been ignominiously dismissed on its being discovered that, although she was only the apothecary's daughter, somehow, when she was in the room, her dancing brown eyes attracted more attention than their own.

An unlucky day it was for Miss Lavinia when she found out what a pleasant thing it was to be made love to by a gentleman! But for that, she might have been happy as an honest man's wife, spending her time and talent in the sweet labour of a wife's and mother's duties, instead of toiling on towards the close of her half century in the questionable delights of a French school-room.

But the well-to-do farmers were all so many boors, and the thriving young tradesmen vulgar louts. *She* look at one of them indeed, when young Lord Coldstone had told her she was the prettiest girl in the county, and Sir Charles Fitznimble presented her with a rose before Lady Barbara Belzie, who never forgave her for taking it.

When the eyes began to lose their brightness, and the Spanish complexion something of its bloom, Miss Lavinia began to think the farmers improved in their manners, and the tradesmen looked quite genteel driving out in their comfortable gigs after the day's healthy work was done. But, oddly enough, the quondam admirers of the village beauty seemed perversely unconscious of this change in her sentiments towards themselves, and were unmannerly enough to court and marry other girls, younger than Miss Lavinia, but less pretty, and less scornful.

By degrees it dawned upon the lady, that she had perhaps been a trifle too ambitious, and that it might have been better for her if she had pitched her pretensions less high. This was a mortifying discovery to make, when the evil was past remedy. She had jilted every marriageable man in the town, and not a few beyond it, and she could not whistle them back again.

But there were good husbands in the world yet, and one fine morning Miss Lavinia betook herself to London in search of one.

She advertised for a situation as governess.

Her first trial was in a country gentleman's family. She remained there a year, but though there was no lack of company off and on, Miss Lavinia got no chance of casting her nets amongst the handsome young men who came down for the shooting and hunting. Her pupils, six in number, were all too young for the drawing-room, and, of course, their governess never appeared there without them. This was evidently loss of time, and the consciousness that there was very little time to lose grew daily stronger and more imperative. She should bestir herself while a chance of success remained. Her next move was into a wealthy merchant's family, where she was to teach one little girl of seven years old. The mother was young and pretty, and thoroughly kind. A few days after the governess's arrival in her new situation, the pretty wife alluded with great satisfaction to her good fortune in meeting with a person so suitable in every way as Miss Lavinia seemed to be.

"My husband and I being both young,

and obliged to receive a good deal and go out," she observed, "we held very much to finding a lady of mature years and steady manners, who would devote herself entirely to our child. Until a woman is past forty she never quite gives up the idea of marrying, and a governess on the look-out for a husband is such a calamity in a house!"

Miss Lavinia, singularly enough, received a letter the next morning, which upset all her plans, and obliged her to give up her situation at once. Her presence was required in her native village, on account of some law business connected with her late father's property, she said.

Four years more were spent in fruitless search after the matrimonial prize. Clearly England was not the place to win it. She must spread her wings, and fly towards the continent; so to the continent Miss Lavinia flew.

An advertisement in Galignani for an English governess in a school, induced her to apply for the situation, *en attendant* the arrival of the expected husband.

Madame St. Simon gave her the prefer-

ence over nineteen others who flocked in one day to offer their services.

Miss Lavinia was, as we have shown, the very antipodes of Miss Jones in appearance and manners. To her new employer this was the best recommendation she could have brought. Madame St. Simon had learned that a genuine English gentlewoman, sensible and well-bred, was not the kind of person to suit her house. Miss Lavinia she voted a fool on the first glance at her simpering face. Judging from the attempt at fashion and finery in her dress, she was likely to be a vain fool. There was no Fabrician integrity to be frightened at. Roman virtue was not apt to be-ribbon and be-flounce itself so flippantly.

"Mademoiselle, je crois que nous nous conviendrons," was Madame St. Simon's conclusion to her mental commentaries.

That evening Miss Lavinia Laventine was installed in her new office.

She was to sleep in the dormitory, and keep the garret-room for her wardrobe, much better stored, apparently, than poor Miss Jones'.

Her first care was to ingratiate herself with the parlour-boarders as the richest, and consequently the most influential portion of the school.

Her preference fastened almost at first sight on Henrietta Wilson. The languid sentimentality of that interesting young lady seemed to point her out as a kindred spirit to the tender-hearted Lavinia.

Milly Jackson she felt drawn to, as a companion only, not one to be made a friend of. Miss Lavinia regarded friendship as a very solemn thing. She had tried all through life to discover an ideal friend, but had been as unsuccessful in that as in another search.

Mabel Stanhope she thought the loveliest girl she had ever seen, but somewhat haughty. Mabel's haughtiness was chiefly in the *pose* of her head; but Miss Lavinia was not physiognomist enough to see that, so she made no attempt to become intimate with Miss Jones' favourite.

About a week after her arrival, Miss Lavinia was doing *surveillance* at the *solfége* lesson. She used to sing in her younger days, and would have dearly liked

to join in with the fresh young choristers standing round the master.

Monsieur Béranger was a fine-looking man, with a frizzly black beard that looked very Italian, Miss Lavinia thought.

"What a handsome man!" she whispered to Milly Jackson. "I wonder is his wife as handsome?"

"He hasn't got a wife."

"Law! what a pity!" exclaimed Miss Lavinia, compassionately.

"He's looking out for one," observed Miss Jackson, confidentially.

"You don't say so! Well, I hope he'll get a nice one. I'm sure he'd make a delightful husband. I do admire a dark man!"

"Mademoiselle Meely, à votre tour," interrupted Monsieur Béranger.

Milly burst out into do, re, mi, with a zest that astounded the audience.

She had discovered the new governess to be a character, and likely to prove capital fun. When the lesson was over, she went up to Miss Lavinia, and remarked very seriously,

"I'm so glad you admire Monsieur Bér-

anger; I do immensely. By-the-bye, did you notice how he stared at you when he was going out of the room?"

"Law! no, did he?" exclaimed the credulous Lavinia.

"As if you didn't see it! I promise you he never looked at Miss Jones like that; but then she was so ugly, and quite old, at least forty."

"Who told you he was looking out for a wife?" inquired Miss Lavinia, coming back to the main point.

"I overheard him talking about it one morning with Madame St. Simon," replied Milly audaciously. "He said he had a decided preference for English women, they were so much more home-loving than French wives. You see if he doesn't propose to you before the month is out!"

"Did I ever!" tittered the governess in an ecstasy.

"You might do worse," pursued the incorrigible Milly; "he must have lots of money, and he goes into the best society; in Paris, you know, artists do, Miss Laventine."

"Pray call me Lavinia. It sounds so

stuck-up between girls, calling each other Miss."

"Lavinia Béranger," said Milly; "how pretty it sounds!"

"You dear creature, what a quiz you are!" exclaimed the delighted Lavinia; "just think if any one heard you!"

Miss Jackson made it a point that every one did hear her before the day was over.

The dialogue, as she gave it, placed the new governess in a very dubious light before her pupils, as far as her claims to their respect were concerned.

"She's worth a dozen of stiff old Joe!" cried Milly in great glee.

"She's not worth the string of Miss Jones' old shoe!" protested Mabel Stanhope indignantly.

Milly knew that perfectly; but Miss Lavinia would be a source of amusement to her, and that compensated for more sterling qualities.

CHAPTER XIII.

IT was Carnival time in Paris, and Madame St. Simon always gave three *soirées dansantes* during the gay season. Nothing was so improving to young people as mixing in good society, and those who frequented the *salon* at Belle-Vue were supposed to represent the flower of the *monde élégant de Paris*.

The announcement that the first reception would take place in a fortnight was received with great delight by the parlour-boarders. The French pupils were never invited, and this privilege shown exclusively to their English companions was regarded as an act of unjust favouritism on the part of the mistress.

Madame St. Simon would gladly have included some of her pretty French pupils in the invitations, but French mothers are wary of allowing their daughters to be seen

in a drawing-room away from their own guardianship. Then it was just possible that their notions of good society might not correspond exactly with Madame St. Simon's.

Be it as it may, the *pensionnaires* saw nothing of the *soirées dansantes* beyond the dresses of the parlour-boarders, which furnished ample matter for comment and criticism in the school.

Madame St. Simon held to the toilettes being elegant. The young ladies of her establishment being all heiresses and of high family, it was, of course, necessary their dress should be in keeping with their position.

Miss Lavinia was busiest of the busy. She spread her three English tarlatans on three chairs in Henrietta Wilson's room, and surveyed them with anxious scrutiny. The pink one became her best, but it was dolefully seedy; the blue was in a less advanced stage of decay, but the colour was trying to her brunette complexion. There remained the white. Madame St. Simon had recommended pure white as the most suitable to her young guests. "C'est jeune, et toujours de bon goût," she

said. The prevailing colour was, therefore, likely to be white.

Miss Lavinia's discoloured flounces would make a sorry figure beside the immaculate toilets of her pupils, all fresh from the needle. They looked dingy enough all alone in their glory, but surrounded by snowy miracles of Paris millinery, they would be ten times worse.

The question was put to Miss Lavinia's intimates, whether it would be possible for her to appear in the old dress.

One and all declared she could not.

It would be an injustice to herself, and almost an *inconvenance* to the mistress of the house.

Miss Lavinia accepted the opinion, and resolved to invest in a new gown.

With a long-drawn sigh, heavy with sweet reminiscences, she shook out the discarded skirts one by one, and threw them over her arm.

"In that dress," she said, caressing the pink, and shaking her head, "in that dress, I danced with the handsomest man I ever beheld, except one; he was an officer six feet tall in the Grenadier Guards,

not the least like an Englishman. Everybody took him for a Spaniard. He waltzed with me three times that night. It's just two years ago. Law! how all the other girls did scowl at me, to be sure!"

"No wonder," exclaimed Miss Woods, who, being four feet two herself, thought waltzing with a Guardsman of six, the very acme of young-ladyish distinction.

"I daresay there won't be a man worth dancing with on Tuesday, after our spending a mint of money on bedizening ourselves," observed Milly Jackson.

"We are sure to have all the professors, except poor old Herr Carl," remarked Henrietta; "but they are not likely to be overcome by our *toilettes*, if they have resisted our beauty unadorned so long."

"A lot of old prigs!" sneered disrespectful Milly. "They won't know how to put one foot before the other."

"The new Italian master is rather good-looking," observed Miss Woods," if he weren't such a tub."

On the principle of contrast, great height in the male sex was the first claim to this young lady's admiration.

"Monsieur Béranger would be worth setting one's cap at," suggested Milly, with a sly look at Miss Lavinia, "if someone else hadn't done us out of any chance in that quarter."

"Who can you possibly mean?" simpered the governess, with a blush and a toss of her head.

"Whoever the cap fits," replied Milly.

"Well, I'm sure!" protested Miss Lavinia, and flounced out of the room.

The whole week preceding the eventful day, was devoted almost exclusively to milliners, mantua-makers, and the numerous tribe whose ingenuity is called in to the completion of a ball dress.

Miss Lavinia scoured the Boulevards in search of a bargain combining fashion, taste, and economy. She was attracted by a *haute nouveauté* figuring in a shop window, and marked thirty-five francs, ready-made. In England she would not have hesitated a moment. The coarse, stiff gauze, with its rows of pink and white *tuyotté* flounces, would have ensured universal admiration; but Paris had a different standard of taste.

Henrietta Wilson's dress had already come home, and thrown Miss Lavinia into alternate paroxysms of despair and delight. It was "une petite robe toute simple," the milliner said, only costing two hundred francs, and composed entirely of white tulle over a silk petticoat; but such a marvel of *bouillonnés* and *tuyottés* and *ruches* and puffings, that how human hands had constructed the fabric, was a mystery to Miss Lavinia.

After much and deep meditation, the foolish woman decided on ordering a similar dress from the same wonder-worker.

Eight pounds was a great sum to spend on a ball dress; she had never committed such a piece of folly in her life; but then it would prove a good investment. She had every reason to believe Monsieur Béranger serious in his views towards her. He made a point of bowing to her, even when she was not *de garde* during his lesson. Once, when she had stopped him in the cloisters with some silly inquiry about the best method of *solfége*, which she said a friend had requested her to ascertain, the

polite and voluble Frenchman had answered her very graciously, remaining uncovered while he spoke, and saying, after the manner of his countrymen, in fifty words what an Englishman would have said in five.

Add to this satisfactory evidence of his intentions, Milly Jackson's assertion that he had fallen in love with the brunette at first sight; hare-brained as Milly was, that had not escaped her.

Altogether Miss Lavinia was in a happy frame of mind, and considered it incumbent on her to spend eight pounds, being just one-third of her earthly capital, in a white tulle dress.

The evening came at last, and Belle-Vue was astir, as it behoved it to be on so great an occasion.

Two hair-dressers had been summoned to shew their skill on the heads of the parlour-boarders. There was hurrying to and fro in the long corridor; figures in dressing-gowns rushing in and out of the rooms where the capillary artists were carrying on their avocations. Loud were the complaints at the time each young

lady exacted for the arrangement of her hair.

"If Harriet Woods made the man do hers three different ways before she was satisfied, how was every one else to be ready by eight o'clock? It was past seven, and there were six more heads to be done!"

"He made a fright of me the first time," protested Miss Woods, "and I don't believe I'm a bit better now."

"Yes, indeed you are," declared Miss Lavinia, who was in a state of mind bordering on insanity, lest her own head should be left in the lurch; "you can't think how nice you are behind."

"Mademoiselle est divinement coiffée!" pronounced the hair-dresser oracularly, as Miss Woods emerged from the white *peignoir* that covered her ball dress.

"It's my turn now," said Henrietta Wilson, ensconsing herself in the chair before the looking-glass.

"Oh, that's too bad!" protested Miss Lavinia, catching hold of the dressing-gown, "when everybody knows I've been waiting here since the man came. N'est-ce pas, Monsieur?"

"Pardon, Madame," replied the *coiffeur*, respectfully disengaging the wrapper from her hands, and throwing it over Henrietta's shoulders, "c'est à Mademoiselle."

"Well, I never!" ejaculated Miss Lavinia, and walked out of the room in disgust.

The man thought, no doubt, that Henrietta's long brown hair offered more scope for his talent than the governess's bristly locks.

His brother artist was doing duty on Milly Jackson, under the superintendence of Mabel Stanhope, Olga Czerlinzka and the three Miss Flemmings.

Every door was standing wide open, and the flaming fires and *bougies* illuminated the dark passage, making it so bright that it hardly knew itself.

Miss Lavinia carried her grievances and her dishevelled hair to *coiffeur numéro deux*.

"Monsieur," she began, "je préfère votre style; vous ferez mes cheveux."

The man bowed, and mumbled something about *trop d'honneur*.

"You'd have stood a better chance of being done next door," put in Milly; "we are three on the list here after me."

"Oh dear, oh dear!" bemoaned Miss Lavinia, wringing her hands, "what am I to do? If you would let me pass before you, Miss Stanhope, I wouldn't delay you five minutes. I only want him to fix my back hair."

"I'm the last on the list," replied Mabel, "but if you like to take my place, you may; I don't think it's possible for him to do us all, so I'll dress my hair myself."

"Don't go till he gets through with me," pleaded Milly, seeing Mabel gather up her brushes and blue ribbons. "Just stay, and see that he doesn't make a Guy of me."

"As if my seeing would prevent him!" laughed Mabel; "but he has almost finished, and I think he has done you very becomingly."

"How do I do?" cried Miss Woods, rushing in with fan, gloves, and *bouquet*, ready for the fight, and turning herself round for inspection.

"Beautifully!" exclaimed the six girls in chorus; Milly could see her in the glass.

Miss Lavinia said nothing. She felt aggrieved and spiteful.

"What a time the man takes!" she grumbled, "he's been at that *bandeau* these five minutes."

"You needn't growl, old lady," observed Milly maliciously, "he'll not go quicker for that."

"Old lady" nettled Miss Lavinia, but she swallowed her indignation in silence. If she quarrelled here, her last chance was gone.

In a few minutes Milly was pronounced *coiffée à ravir*, and her place was taken by the eldest Miss Flemming.

Mabel then betook herself to her own room, and with some assistance from Olga succeeded in intertwining the roll of light blue ribbon through her hair, and arranging it in a way that was highly approved of by her companions, and voted far more artistic than anything achieved by the *coiffeurs*.

Perhaps they were right. The hair and the head were both so beautiful that no

decoration could have increased their loveliness. The thick rolls of silken hair were twisted like ropes of gold round the small graceful head, and formed a coronet more perfect than anything art could weave.

Mabel's toilet was as simple as her headdress. Sir John Stanhope had sent his daughter a much larger cheque for the evening's finery than would have paid for the most expensive dress there; but Mabel had refused to buy a new one, seeing that Lady Stanhope had inserted a very elegant white muslin dress into her daughter's *trousseau*, in case the dear child should have an occasion to wear such a thing. It was quite dressed enough for the purpose, Mabel thought. She was exquisitely neat at all times, and wished to appear becomingly attired this evening, with that natural desire to please that is born with every woman.

To say that Mabel did not know she was beautiful would be absurd. Beauty is a royalty that is never held in ignorance, one of God's good gifts, to be valued as such; a weapon mighty for good or evil.

Mabel was an artist in soul, and in re-

ality painted with no common skill; it was therefore impossible for her not to perceive, in looking at her glass, that it reflected a set of features faultless in every line. The liquid hazel eyes, sheltered by long, dark lashes, were perfect in colour and in shape; the forehead was smooth and fair as alabaster; the mouth so exquisitely pure in its full, chiselled outline, was perhaps the greatest beauty of the face.

Mabel had too keen a sense of the beautiful not to see all this in her mirror; but she saw it as one sees a picture, with cold, dispassionate observation. She was too ignorant of its power to set a high price upon the gift; she had still to learn its value, and test her own strength in wielding the two-edged sword.

Perhaps no woman awakes to the full consciousness of her own beauty till she sees it reflected in the eyes of the man she loves. It breaks upon her then with a sense of triumph and of power, that either floods the heart with a pure, unselfish joy, or swells it with unholy pride.

Unless a girl be an incipient coquette,

(some people would say every girl is, but we deny that), she is not likely to fall in love with her own face till some one else does.

Now Mabel Stanhope was in her seventeenth year, and perfectly heart-whole. The flashing of her dark eyes, and the witchery of her smile had, as yet, brought no victims to awake her pride. She saw that she was beautiful; every one around her saw it, and said so; Mabel believed them, and was glad of it, but no thrill of triumphant vanity came with the knowledge.

She fastened on her broad blue sash, and drew on her gloves with a pleasant feeling, that there was no fear of her being called a "guy" that evening.

Every one was now nearly ready, except poor Miss Lavinia, who wandered in and out of the different rooms, worrying everybody with her complaints at the unfairness of her not being attended to, and appealing to everybody to help her.

"Where is the use of whining and whimpering?" cried Milly Jackson, out of patience with her grumbling; "it won't

curl your hair, and you'll come down looking as cross as two sticks."

"Oh my! oh my!" cried Miss Lavinia, distractedly, "there is eight o'clock! I'll never be done!"

"Do yourself as Mabel did," was Milly's consolatory advice.

"Yes, and spoil my dress, or lose half an hour taking it off, and putting it on again!" scolded Miss Lavinia. "I never knew such a selfish set of girls in my life!"

"You don't mean it!" sneered Milly, clasping her bracelet.

Coiffeur No. 2 came to the door where the two ladies were interchanging compliments, and called out:

"Je suis aux ordres de Madame."

Miss Lavinia could have embraced the man, but had strength of mind not to do it, and sat down before Miss Jackson's dressing-table, laying hands on every appliance it presented for her deliverer's convenience: brushes, combs, powder, and pomatum.

Milly was about to protest, but throwing her eyes on the glass, she felt benignly

disposed towards her fellow-creatures, and took no notice of Lavinia's misdemeanor.

She sauntered out of the room to survey and be surveyed, feeling decidedly satisfied with her own appearance. Without being handsome, she was a fine, striking girl, with that clear, English complexion that gave her imminently what the French call "la beauté du diable."

Fanchette, the parlour-maid, with a letter in her hand, came panting up the stairs as Miss Jackson appeared in the corridor.

"Pour moi!" cried the latter, laying hold of the missive.

"Non, c'est pour Mademoiselle Henriette," replied the woman, surrendering the envelope to her scrutiny. "*Ces demoiselles* are to come down at once; there is *du monde* already, and nobody in the salon but Madame."

She left Milly puzzling over the writing and the seal, and the postmark of her friend's letter, and went on to deliver her message to the others.

"A coronet," said Milly, holding up the letter to the *quinquet* on the wall, "and a

Paris stamp, hem! A man's writing, too. Sly boots!" and she went to look for Henrietta.

"Come here, Henrietta, I want you," she cried, beckoning to her friend, who was standing in Miss Wood's room, giving a finishing shake to the folds of that young lady's dress.

Henrietta came out.

"I have a word to say to you, come into your own room; that antique goose, Lavinia, is in mine."

When they were alone, Milly dropped the letter on the table from the folds of her handkerchief.

"I wonder who that is from?" she said, fixing her eye on Henrietta.

Henrietta snatched at the letter with a scream.

"Please don't get up a fainting fit; there's no time, and besides it would crush your dress. Just read it, and let us hear what he says."

Miss Wilson had nothing for it but to break the seal. She trembled so violently that Milly, in compassion, pushed a chair towards her, and bade her sit down.

"He is coming here to-night," she cried, letting the paper drop on her knees.

Miss Jackson, we blush to record it, but the truth must be told, Miss Jackson gave a low whistle!

She put out her hand to take the letter. Henrietta clutched it tightly. Expose those rapturous lines to Milly's sarcasm! No, that she could not do.

"I'll tell you what he says, but I can't show it to you," she said, looking up beseechingly at her confidante.

"Well!" protested Milly sulkily.

"Don't be angry, Milly dear, there's nothing in it you'd care to see, indeed there isn't, and I'll tell you it all."

"Very likely!" sneered Miss Jackson; "however, I ought perhaps to thank you for sparing my nerves. Pray how is Leander to reach his lady-love? What a pity there isn't a ditch, or a pond, or something for him to swim across! of course he's not likely to walk on his feet, and come in at the door like a common mortal!"

"Yes, he is," dissented Henrietta, meekly; "he's been invited to the soirée by Madame St. Simon.

"The girl is gone mad!" declared Miss Jackson, starting two steps backward.

"No, no, I'm not. He says a friend got an invitation for him; he is to be here at nine, and of course says—"

"Dépêchez-vous, Mesdemoiselles!" cried Fanchette, thundering at the door.

Henrietta thrust her letter into her pocket, and kissing Milly, implored her not to betray her by word or look.

Milly promised, in true school-girl fashion, "on her sacred honour," to die rather than compromise her friend. Then the two sallied out together, and found their companions assembled in the passage.

They mustered twelve in number, and a pretty group they made, those fresh young girls, all fluttering with excitement and expected pleasure.

Miss Lavinia was still in the hands of the *coiffeur*, and might be heard sending forth piteous entreaties for "a few more

hair-pins," as her pupils betook themselves down stairs.

There was a scuffle at the *salon* door, not for precedence, but to escape it. Little Miss Woods declared Jemima Long, being the tallest, should go first. Jemima fell into the rear, alleging that Henrietta Wilson as eldest of the party was most fit to take the lead. Henrietta uttered a faint, "oh, dreadful!" and fell behind Jemima.

In fact the question ran a bad chance of being settled at all, if Fanchette, impatient at the delay, had not thrown open the door, and ushered the scufflers into the presence as they stood.

Madame St. Simon came forward with her blandest smile to welcome her young guests. She had a *petit mot* for every one, a compliment or a caress.

The room was brilliantly lighted; the new lustre, "a surprise from *ces chères enfans*," Madame whispered to her friends, was inaugurated for the occasion. There were flowers here and there, and alto-

gether the large, square *salon*, looked as gay and pretty as need be.

Before nine, it was tolerably filled; the company were not of that class who come to take tea with a friend at eleven o'clock.

As the young ladies had prophesied, all the professors were there; all except Monsieur Béranger.

Miss Lavinia had made her appearance about half-past eight, looking painfully ridiculous in her fleecy toilet, her hair tormented into the most distressing predicament on the top of her head. The *coiffeur* had done his worst. The little cork-screwy curls were gathered off her face, making the sharp angles sharper, and showing up every wrinkle that used to shelter itself behind the curls in their natural state. It was a pitiable sight; but youth is pitiless to such folly as Miss Lavinia's. Her appearance in the *salon* was followed by a suppressed titter all round the room. She was too excited to notice it, and casting about for some eligible position, made her way to a vacant seat near Miss Wilson. Their dresses were alike, and Miss Lavinia thought

they should probably be taken for sisters.

Dancing had commenced.

Henrietta made a pretence of being absorbed in her neighbour's conversation, and busied herself with some imaginary complication in the buttons of her glove. She was resolved Adrien should not find her flying round the room in any one else's arms, and was terrified she should be asked to dance before he arrived.

Miss Lavinia was equally nervous on her own account. What could M. Béranger mean by not coming? Of course he was invited; she had no doubt on that score. Could he be ill? Then her two hundred francs would be thrown away, after all!

Henrietta might have set her heart at rest if she had chosen; but even to Milly Jackson she had not explained how, and through whom, Monsieur de Perronville was bidden to the dance this evening. She did not say that her lover had particularly inquired the names of the artists attending Belle-Vue, in answer to a letter in which she had mentioned the ap-

proaching soirée, and expressed a vain wish that he might be there. It was not necessary to tell Milly that Adrien sang divinely (since he sang at all, of course it was divinely), and was taking lessons from Monsieur Béranger, and how the pupil and master had grown intimate over their *solfége*, so that when, quite casually, the master spoke of his being invited to a *soirée dansante* at Belle-Vue, where there was a very flower-garden of *jolies Anglaises*, the pupil had said: "Ma foi! je voudrais bien voir cela!" and how Monsieur Béranger had asked Madame St. Simon for an invitation for his friend the Vicomte de Perronville, dubbed "Vicomte" for the occasion, which was graciously granted by the mistress of the house. All this, as it occurred, had been made known to Henrietta, and if she were conscious of Miss Lavinia's anxiety of mind, it was certainly unkind not to relieve it, as she might have done.

Ten minutes past nine, and still the two sat in trembling suspense. The quadrille was over, and there was a lull in the music. *Ces messieurs* bowed their

partners to seats, plunged for their hats under the vacant chairs, and stood about in groups chatting together.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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